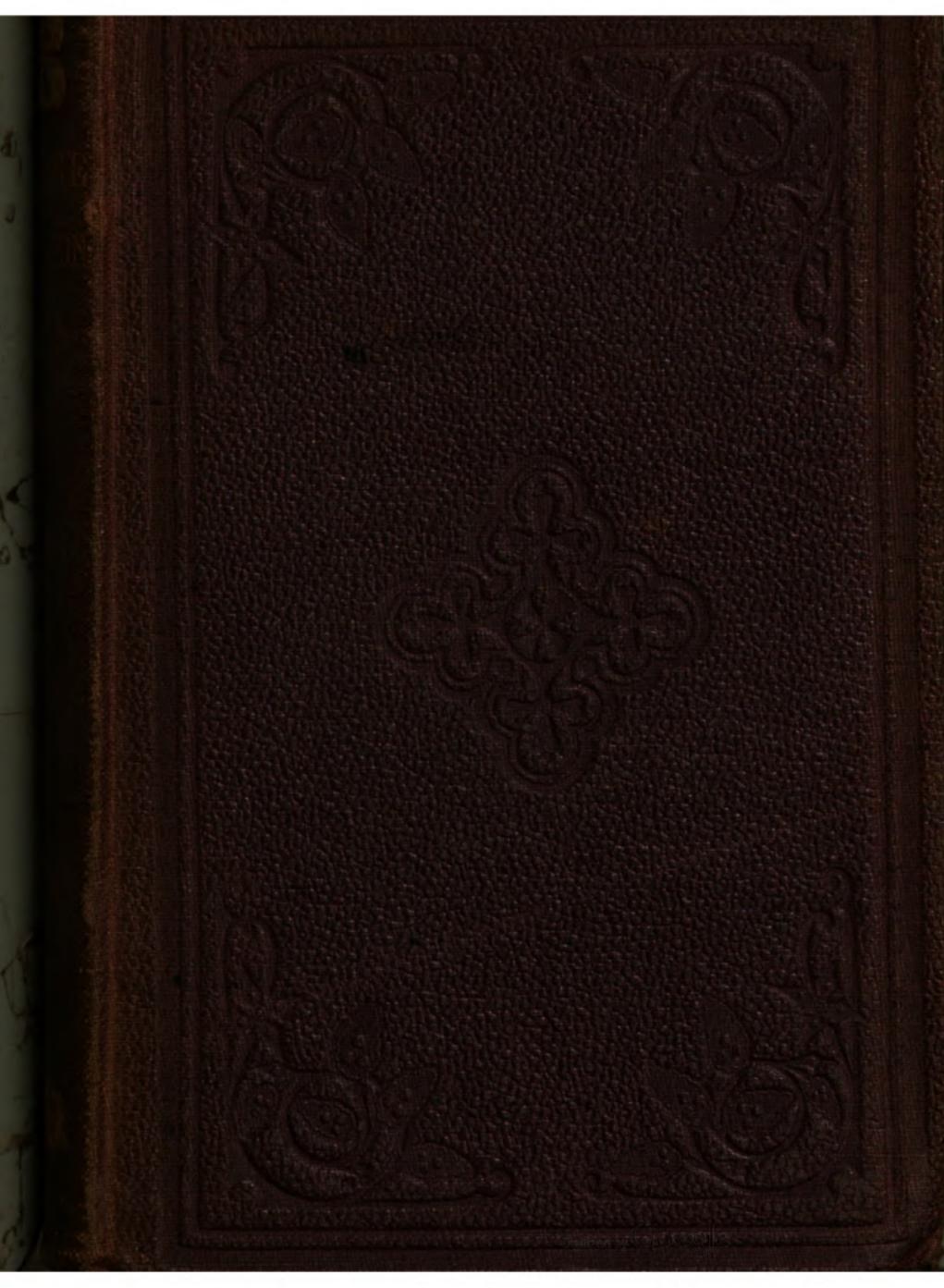

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A TREATISE
ON
AURICULAR CONFESSION.

A TREATISE
ON
AURICULAR CONFESION,
DOGMENTICAL, HISTORICAL, & PRACTICAL.

BY THE



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INTRODUCTION.

ONE of the greatest blessings of God, bestowed upon His Church, is the institution of the Sacrament of Penance, of which Confession forms so important an element. "It is," as the holy Fathers observe, "the abolition of crime, the liberation from eternal death, the triumph over the devil, the salvation of souls, the destroyer of vice, the terror of evil spirits, the light and hope of the faithful, and the opening of Paradise." Hence it is not strange that the partisans of error and vice should wage a furious war against this consoling dogma of our holy faith, and attempt to persuade simple and ignorant people that the secret confession of sins to a priest is not a divine ordinance, not a command of Jesus Christ, but a mere human device, a piece of priestcraft, used as a means to domineer over

consciences, to discover secrets, to tyrannize over people, and keep them in oppression and slavery.

Although this calumny has been again and again confuted by many learned theologians and defenders of our holy religion, nevertheless, the same is found to be still incessantly repeated, even at the present time, both in Protestant and Catholic countries, in order to seduce the simple, and divert them from approaching this necessary means of salvation (the only plank whereby, under ordinary circumstances, we can escape eternal perdition after the shipwreck of mortal sin). We have, therefore, thought it our duty to make a further effort to confute it, by developing a little work we wrote in Italian, in the year 1861 (of which three editions were subsequently published), and proving that sacramental confession of sins to a lawful priest (which is called *auricular confession*), far from being a human institution, is truly a *divine institution*; not pernicious nor useless, but, on the contrary, *very useful, and absolutely necessary*. This we prove by

arguments and testimonies taken not only from theology, but also from history, from Protestant evidence, and from the fact that even infidel philosophers and celebrated men, especially of the last century, praised, inculcated, and at the point of death practised auricular confession.

The evidence of the divine institution of confession, and the power of absolving from sin, being established, we next proceed to examine and confute the objections made against it; and thus close the first part of this little work. The second part is practical; and in it the requisites for a good confession are fully expounded.

In presenting to the reader this exposition of a Catholic dogma, it has been our particular care to look not only to the strictest theological precision of the terms used, but also to the clearest exposition possible of the doctrine; particularly when speaking of the more difficult part of it, that is, sorrow for sin. We have tried on the whole, as far as we could, to make ourselves understood by the ignorant, and, at the same time, not to displease the learned. In

conclusion, our object in this undertaking has been to contribute, by the divine help, to the glory of God, by convincing, persuading, and gaining over the enemies of confession; and to give to the souls of the faithful a guide to make a good confession, and by it to insure their eternal salvation.

The First and Theoretical Part.

CHAPTER I.

ANTIQUITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF CONFESSION.

SECTION I.

The Voice of Human Nature calls for the Confession of Sin.

MAN, in his capacity of a rational being, is bound to follow in everything the dictates of reason, and to do nothing of which reason disapproves. If, however, instead of following its voice, he permits himself to commit an action that is contrary thereto, much more, if it be grievously disapproved of by it, he soon experiences in himself the effects of his crime. His conscience is lacerated by remorse, he cannot find peace, he falls into despair; and finding himself in such a state, he feels most anxious to discover some one to whom he may disclose the cause of his disquietude, which he knows to be the guilt he has committed. Hence, he looks for a loving heart, that may kindly receive, direct, and

console him. He wants the good Samaritan, who will be moved with compassion at seeing him robbed and wounded, who will bind up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and who will set him upon his own beast and take care of him. He wants the priest of God, who will receive, embrace, and press him to his heart; who, having heard the cause of his grief, and having seen the wounds of his soul, will cure them, and restore to him the peace he has lost. Thus, the want of confession is felt in the human heart when sin enters into it, and thus the sacrament of penance traces its importance to the profoundest depths of human nature. An example of this is to be found in Lamech, who could not help confessing spontaneously, before Ada and Sella, the manslaughter he had unobservedly committed, saying (Gen. iv.): "Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech: for I have slain a man to the wounding of myself, and a stripling to my own bruising." Further evidence of the voice of nature calling for the confession of sins, is to be found in the want that a prudent man feels in himself of an external direction, in addition to the dictates of his own conscience. For such is the violence of human passions, and such their power over the heart of man, that every prudent person is aware of the danger of abandoning himself to the sole dictates of his own conscience, and feels the want of the external confidential direction of one

to whom he may communicate his dangerous inclinations and propensities, and hear from him, if he has fallen into error, what he has to do in order to avoid evil for the future, and to walk in the right way of reason. Upon this subject Count de Maistre, in the work "The Pope" (book iii.), speaks in this way: "What is there more natural to man than that impulse which inclines one soul towards another, in order to communicate a secret? The wretched man who is distracted by remorse or by chagrin, has need of a friend—a confidant, who shall listen to him, console him, and sometimes direct him. The stomach which contains poison, and which is spontaneously convulsed in order to eject it, is the natural image of a heart into which crime has poured its poisons. It suffers, it is agitated, it is contracted, until it has found the ear of friendship, or, at least, that of benevolence. But when from confidential communication we pass to confession, and the avowal is made to authority, the conscience of mankind recognizes in this spontaneous confession an expiatory power and a meriting of grace. There is but one sentiment on this point, from the mother who questions her child in regard to a piece of broken china, or some sweetmeats partaken of contrary to orders, to the judge who, from the height of his tribunal, interrogates the robber and the assassin." This truth is so clear, that Voltaire himself (in his remarks

upon Olimpie), speaking of confession, said : "Most persons who have fallen into great sins, naturally feel remorse for them ; and if there is any consolation for them in this world, it is their being able to be reconciled to God and to themselves." The same has been acknowledged by the Saint-Simonians, as is related in the newspaper *Le Globe*, of the 6th Feb., 1833, in these words : "Oh, it must be a great consolation for the guilty, and not a little joy for the innocent, to know to whom his heart may be opened, to whom he may show his wounds and explain his griefs, and be certain of always finding a physician, a consoler, a friend ! Who is there that in this life has not felt the imperious want of bending his soul towards that of another, to pour in a secret ? Who can say that he has had no reason to be thankful to his friend for his tender curiosity, and esteemed it as a good service rendered to him, when, shaking his hand, that friend has said to him : 'What is the matter ? Tell it me !' And what greater benefit, when doing so, was to comply with a duty ; when the Church came to say to the sinner, in the name of God, such words of interest and sympathy, when confidence took a religious character, and was changed into confession ?"

In fine, a new proof that the voice of nature calls for confession of sin, we find in the *Weekly Register* of the 19th Nov., 1864, in one of its leading

articles, viz., on *Human Justice*, in which it is said as follows : "Invited some years ago by a well-known Protestant philanthropist, of rare energy and talent, to visit a reformatory, of which the inmates were all juvenile criminals, we willingly accepted the proposal. . . . But the most remarkable fact elicited during our visit was the following : 'It is curious,' said the founder and manager (a person of extreme Protestant opinions), 'that the first instinct of these young people on coming to us, seems to be the desire of relieving themselves *by confession*.' 'And how,' we asked, 'do you gratify this wish?' 'Well, I encourage them to tell me privately whatever presses most heavily on their conscience; and I do so, because I am aware of the moral effect which the act seems to exert upon them. You have certainly a great advantage in your communion in the habitual practice of confession, though I do not believe it to be a sacrament, nor approve the use which you make of it.' Such was the testimony of a highly-gifted Protestant, who only knew, like all the professors of the same mutilated creed, how to praise what was human, while rejecting what was divine."

SECTION II.

Confession typified, or prefigured, among the first Believers under the Law of Nature, previous to the Law of Moses.

There can be no doubt that many truths and mysteries of Christianity were revealed by God, under shadows and figures, in times far distant and remote from their accomplishment. Now, amongst other important truths of the kind, we find the *sacrament of penance revealed* long before its divine institution; and first let us view it under the law of nature.

Our first parents having been the first sinners in the world, exhibit likewise the *first type and figure* of this sacrament. The devil, under the form of a serpent, approached Eve, and, designing to induce her to transgress the command of God, and so lose paradise, instigated her to eat the forbidden fruit. She, yielding to the temptation, ate the fruit, and gave it to her husband, who likewise ate it. Eve and Adam having thus transgressed the command of God, and committed a mortal sin, it became necessary for them to confess it, in order to receive God's pardon. Hence God called Adam, and said to him : "Where art thou ? And he said : I heard thy voice in paradise ; and I was afraid, because I

was naked, and I hid myself. And God said to him : Who hath told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" So God put as it were in the mouth of Adam, the confession of his crime. In reply, Adam said : "The woman, whom thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Here is the *confession* of Adam—"I DID EAT." Then God turning to Eve asked her : "Why hast thou done this ? And she answered : The serpent deceived me, and I DID EAT." Now the holy Fathers, Ambrose, Gregory the Great, John Chrysostom, and others, recognize in this fact, the first figure and type of sacramental confession.

We find, in like manner, another instance of it, when Cain having killed Abel, God asked him : "Where is Abel thy brother?" "And by this (observes S. Ambrose), God meant to *induce* Cain to repentance." And S. John Chrysostom (Homil. 2, de Poenit.), upon the same words, "Where is Abel thy brother?" says : "He who knows everything asked, not because He is ignorant of it, but to engage this murderer to *penitence*."

SECTION III.

*Confession traced and commanded by God in the
Mosaic Law.*

Confession in the Old Law is still more clearly demonstrated, nay, it is there *positively* commanded by God to his people ; for we read in the Book of Numbers (v. 6, 7) : “When a man or a woman shall have committed any of all the sins that men are wont to commit, and by negligence shall have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and offended, they shall confess their sin ;” and in the Book of Proverbs (xxviii. 13) it is said : “He that hideth his sins shall not prosper ; but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy.” In Ecclesiasticus (iv. 31), the sinner is exhorted as follows : “Be not ashamed to confess thy sins, but submit not thyself to every man for sin.” Now, from the above testimonies, it is evident : 1st, that God commanded His people to confess their sins ; 2nd, that in order to prosper, no sin should be omitted in the confession through shame ; and 3rd, that a good minister of reconciliation is to be chosen.

But this is not all. In Leviticus (chap. v. 18), the priest is directed to determine sacrifices according to the measure and estimation of the sins confessed to him : “He shall offer according

to the measure and estimation of the sin." Hence, there were different sacrifices to be offered up, according to the different kinds and qualities of sins ; but how could the priest proportion the victims to the *number and quality* of the sins, unless an obligation had been imposed upon sinners to confess their sins in *particular*, according to their number and kind. Therefore, private confession to the priest of all sins in particular, has been not only shadowed or typified in the Old Law, but *positively commanded* by God to His people. This is so clear, that the Protestant Grotius, commenting on the 6th verse of the 3rd chapter of S. Matthew's Gospel, expresses himself in this way : " I think there is much probability in the opinion of those who maintain that the confession of sins made to the priest was observed among the Jews." Bartalocci, commenting on the 5th chapter of Leviticus, observes that among the synagogue confession was in practice, and that this was made, *not* in the presence of the people, but *only* of *the priest*, and it was evidently *auricular*, because made known only to the priest, that is, to *his ear* alone. Also, S. Augustine (Lib. de Visit. Infirm. c. 4) says, that " not only in the New, but also in the Old Law, God absolved those only who confessed their sins to His minister." " It is necessary," he says, " to subject himself to the judgment of the vicar of God . . . and this either under the law or under grace : ' Go

and show yourselves to the priests.” This confession or manifestation of sins, which was to be made to the priests, in some extraordinary cases was made to the Prophets whom God sent to receive it. An instance of it is to be found in the history of King David. This monarch, walking on the housetop after his sleep, looked unguardedly on the wife of another ; he yielded to concupiscence, and, moved by human passion, completed the sin. Nathan the Prophet presents himself to him, on the part of God, to hear the confession of his crime, and David, with feelings of confusion and grief, confesses his sin, saying : “ I have sinned against the Lord ” (II. Kings, xii. 13) ; and the Prophet, on account of his repentance and confession, assures him of pardon, saying : “ The Lord also hath taken away thy sin.” Upon which, S. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechism, ii. 12, 17), says : “ As he confessed ingenuously, he obtained a most speedy cure. . . . If a king thus confessed, oughtest not thou, a private man, to confess ? Thou seest that for the repentant there is salvation.” In the work entitled “ The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,” it is stated that each one of the sons of Jacob, before death, *made his confession*. This work, written in the Hebrew Hellenist language, although apocryphal, and not quite free from some fabulous statements, has been judged by critics to be as old as the second century, and is believed to have been probably

written by a Jew, converted to Christianity. From it the practice of confession at that time is evidently evinced. That this practice had existed among the Jews until the coming of our Redeemer, appears also from the evangelical history (Matt. iii. 16), where it is related, that S. John the Baptist, on the banks of the Jordan, when preparing the Jews for the coming of the Messiah, did so by receiving the confession of their sins : "And they were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins." Neither did the custom of private confession amongst the Jews cease after the coming of Jesus Christ, but continued and *still continues* among them, as is clear from the testimony of their most celebrated Rabbins. They say that pardon of sins cannot be obtained without penance, and that penance is not perfect unless accompanied with confession. Moses of Trani (Apud Morinum, p. 128) speaks as follows : "Penance and confession form but one and the same precept ; because there is no confession without penance, and it is confession that makes penance perfect." David Kinchi (Bartolocci, p. 461) not only bears testimony that confession existed in the Old Law, but adds that the very sacrifices, without confession, were of no profit. "The whole virtue of sacrifices consists in the confession of sins and in penance." If the old book, "Beth Midol" (Morino, p. 130), it is so stated : "It is necessary that he should confess clearly and

distinctly everything he finds he has disorderly and shamefully committed in his actions ; for if he be afraid of doing so, his repentance is not perfect. If the sinner do not return sincerely to God, and if he do not confess his iniquities, God will take revenge upon him." In the "Book of Saints" (Morino, p. 133) it is written thus : "The Jews, wishing to do penance, go to their Rabbins to consult them on the manner of doing it, and to know what penance is to be done for every sin they may have committed. For this reason they discover to the Rabbins, *privately* and in *secret*, their sins against God and their neighbour, in order to receive due penance." The same author adds (*loc. cit.*) : "The Jews, through fear of forgetting sins in confession, use the precaution of writing them on paper." John Buxtorf (*Synagog. Jud. c. 35*) affirms that modern Jews go to confession in almost the same manner as the Christians at the point of death, with this difference, that the most ignorant of them make use of a general form of confessing sins ; but, as to the rest, they confess their sins in particular. Now, from all the above testimonies, it is clear that from the time of Moses till the present day, the Jews have considered the confession of sins as a command of God, and have practised it, not in a *general* way, but in *particular*, according to the number and the kind of sins, and *in secret* before the minister of their religion.

SECTION IV.

The belief in the necessity of Confession, and the Practice of it, among all Pagan Nations.

The belief in the necessity of confession, or manifestation of sin, amongst the pagans, is proved by the fact, that confession has been always used by them. History is so full of such instances, that it may be said, without fear of error, that there is not one of the pagan nations, whether ancient or modern, that could not exhibit at least some mark of the practice of confession. Let us begin with the ancient pagan nations.

Amongst the ancient pagans there was the rite of *expiations*, in which the practice of confession is indicated. For, on that occasion, the penitent had, at least implicitly, to confess that he *was a sinner, but at present was repentant of the evil he had done*, as it has been proved by the learned Smith, in his work “The Redemption of the Human Race.” Voltaire writes (“Histoire Generale,” tom. i.): “They went to confession when they had to celebrate the mysteries of Bacchus, Venus and Adonis.” The priests appointed to hear confession carried a key hung on their shoulders, which was the sign of the secret they had to keep of what they heard in

confession, as it has been demonstrated by the Baron de St. Croix. ("Recherches sur les Mystères du Paganisme," vol. i. p. 33.) From Frederick Creuzer ("Religions of Antiquity") we know, that in Samothracia, any one who wished to be initiated into the mysteries of the Rabbins, that is, of priesthood, had to prepare himself for it by sacrifices of expiation, purifications, and a *regular confession*. The minister, who, in their credence, had the power to give absolution, was named Koes, that is *purifier*. From the work "Voyages d'Anacharsis" (tom. iv. chap. 68), it appears that in Eleusis, in order to be initiated in the mysteries of Ceres, it was found necessary to endure a long and painful training, and all those were excluded who were guilty of grievous crimes ; nobody, even if he were a king, could be dispensed from the *confession* of his sins. Voltaire relates (Hist. Gen.) that Marcus Aurelius, when associated with these mysteries, *went to confession* to the hierophant minister of the worship in Eleusis. The above-mentioned Baron of St. Croix, in the same work, states, that among the people of Greece and Asia, persons agitated by remorse of conscience found the means of making peace by submitting themselves to the examination of a minister called *Auditor*, to whom it belonged *to hear the confessions* of sinners. The culprit could not be absolved, unless he swore that he would become virtuous, and begin a new life. The hierophant,

in all the mysteries of Greece, in sending home the assembled people, used to pronounce the two Egyptian words signifying “*watch, be pure*”—that is, take care, sin no more. In fine, it is to be mentioned, that in Elis there were theologians who had the *direction of consciences*, and who were consulted by the people in order to know if some actions were or were not in accordance with the divine justice, as has been related in the work already quoted, “*Voyages d' Anacharsis.*” (tom. ii. c. 21.)

But from ancient let us pass to modern paganism. Among the Chinese, the Emperor, according to the requirements of their superstitious worship, going to sacrifices, practises many ceremonies, and above all, a certain appearance of *confession*. He reads in a low voice the written account of his good and bad actions; he expresses his repentance for the evil he has done, and promises better conduct for the future. This declaration being made, he burns the piece of silk in which his sins were written. (Let. Edif. s. 1, Tabl., Relig. de la Chine.) In Thibet, as has been related by Father Brunet (“*Parallele des Religions,*” tom. i. p. 294), the monks as well as the laymen have their spiritual father, to whom they confess their sins; and while the penitent says, *I have sinned*, the director recites over him a prayer to obtain the pardon he asks. The same author (page 306) relates, that the Lhamas, or Bhuddist

monks of Thibet, four times a month, assemble to hear the explanation of their rule, and that on this occasion the Grand Lhama, before entering the assembly, makes *his confession* to him whom he has entrusted with the direction of his conscience; and then, having entered the temple, recommends every one of his monks *to go to confession*. In the Annals of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith (tom. v. page 199) it has been stated, that in the kingdom of Siam there is a kind of mendicant monks, called Talapoini, who every morning go out begging, and that in the evening, on returning to the pagoda, they kneel at the feet of their superior, and make to him *their confession*, after which they receive from him their *penance*. Father Brunet, in the above-mentioned work (tom. i. p. 261), says, that in Ceylon the Bonzes are considered to be the *physicians of souls*. In the kingdom of Persia (ib. page 13), the ministers of religion, called Magi, being divided into five classes, it is the duty of one of them to *hear confessions*. The Indians have constantly believed that by *confessing sins* pardon is granted. An annual festival is celebrated by them, during which they go to *confession* on the banks of a river, that by this means their sins may be entirely taken away. In the famous sacrifice "Ekiani," the wife of the president is obliged to go to *confession*, and show distinctly the number and kind of her sins, even the most humiliating ones. (Let. Edif. tom. viii.

p. 14.) There are also instances of confessions, made by the same people, of sins of mere thought, as may be seen in the history of Draupoli and Five Brothers related by the Abbé Dubois, in his work "Mœurs et Institutions des Peuples de l'Inde." Now, it appears evident from all the testimonies we have quoted, that among all the pagan nations of the world, ancient and modern, there has prevailed, and still exists, the belief in the *necessity* of *confession*, or manifestation of sin, either private or public, and that it has been practised till the present day.

CHAPTER II.

INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE IN THE LAW OF GRACE.

SECTION I.

Jesus Christ is the Institutor of this Sacrament.

IN the preceding chapter, having proved that confession, either by natural light or revelation, has been practised by all nations, we shall now proceed to show that this universal practice has been reduced to a law, and elevated to the dignity of a sacrament by Jesus Christ. Hence, in the law of grace, confession is the second part of the sacrament of penance, and sacramental confession is a secret and sorrowful accusation, which the penitent makes to a lawful priest, of all his sins committed after baptism, which occur to his memory after a diligent examination of his conscience, in order to receive absolution by the power of the keys that Jesus Christ has given to His Church.

In the above definition it is said : 1. That confession is an *accusation*, in order to show that every excuse, extenuation, or mitigation of the sin, should be excluded from confession. 2. That such

accusation is secret, to distinguish it from that public confession which, *besides the secret*, was formerly used in the Church for public sins. 3. That it must be of *all the sins which occur to the memory* of the penitent ; because, if the penitent yields to the temptation of hiding any mortal sin, the whole confession is worthless and sacrilegious. There is, however, no obligation of mentioning venial sins, except few particular cases, when, by an important aggravating circumstance or wicked intention, the venial sin is made mortal : for instance, to steal from a poor person an article worth only a halfpenny, but absolutely necessary to him for the exercise of his trade, or to steal a penny with the intention, at the same time, of stealing from the same person a guinea ; in both cases it is necessary to confess such a thing, because what was in itself a venial sin, by the added circumstance just mentioned, changing its nature, becomes a mortal one. 4. That confession must be made to a *lawful priest*, that is, to a priest approved by lawful ecclesiastical authority for hearing confessions (because hearing confession is an act of jurisdiction, which requires not only valid ordination, but also the special commission of the lawful authority). But in case of necessity, as in the case of a Christian being in immediate danger of death, every priest, although deprived of jurisdiction, may be called, and by him the confession be heard, and

absolution validly given, especially when no other priest approved for administrating the sacrament of confession can be found.

Having thus explained the nature of confession, let us now speak of the institution of the sacrament of penance. It is to be observed that man, through baptism, is freed both from original and actual sin, and born again a child of God, and an heir of paradise. But this great benefit is lost to the Christian when he has the misfortune of falling into mortal sin after baptism; for on account of the new offence against God, he has again become involved in the decree of eternal damnation. Now, God sincerely desiring our salvation, by a new impulse of love, instituted the sacrament of penance, through which, such as have lost their baptismal grace, regain it by the infusion of the new grace of Jesus Christ, through the absolution of His minister. To this end our blessed Saviour, having made S. Peter head of the Church, said to him : "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." (Mat. xvi. 19.) This promise, made to the Prince of the Apostles, with regard to the power of binding or loosing souls from sin, was afterwards extended by Jesus Christ Himself to the other Apostles (xviii. 18) : "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever

you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven ; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." The fulfilment, then, of this promise is recorded in S. John (xx. 22, 23), and took place when our Redeemer, appearing before His Apostles after His resurrection, and breathing on them, said to them :— " Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them ; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Now, from these imposing words, it is plain, that, by command of Jesus Christ, our sins are to be forgiven, through the sacramental absolution of His minister (that is, the priest), so that those sins which are not forgiven through the absolution of the priest, are retained, that is, are not forgiven. Hence, the priests of His Church are constituted by Jesus Christ arbitrators and judges of the souls on earth, so that absolution given or denied by them is a true sentence, which is ratified by Jesus Christ in heaven: " Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them ; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." This power of absolving from sins was not limited by Jesus Christ to the persons of the Apostles, but communicated likewise to all bishops and priests who succeed to their apostolical charge. It is an incontestable principle of Christianity, that every ordinance or institution of our divine Saviour, which by its natural tendency is calculated for the good of

mankind in general, or of the Church in particular, must be judged to remain in *full force* as long as the Church has a being, and the same occasion or exigency of the institution subsists. Now, such was the case with regard to the institution of the sacrament of penance, which was established by Jesus Christ as a permanent means of salvation in His Church, when He gave the Apostles the power of loosing and binding. Hence, this power should be transmitted to their successors, to perpetuate in the Church such a means of salvation. Baptism and penance are two institutions which bear the same character of perpetuity in the Church, and the same necessity for salvation, being both equally necessary for entering the kingdom of heaven. The first for all ; the second for such as have lost baptismal grace, confession being the only appointed means for escaping eternal perdition after the shipwreck we suffer from mortal sin. Now it is acknowledged by those who differ from us in this article of faith, that when our Saviour addressed these words to the Apostles, " Go, and baptize all nations," He did not mean to confine that power to the Apostles, but meant that it should extend to their successors, and continue in the Church throughout all ages. Therefore, by a just parity of reasoning, the general powerful words, *whatever sins* and *whosoever sins*, are not to be confined nor restricted to the persons of the Apostles, but must

be extended to their successors in the apostolic ministry in all ages of the Church. Hence, as it belonged to the charge of the Apostles not only to administer baptism, but also to absolve from sins, so the same belongs to the charge of a priest. In fact, by the imposition of hands, every priest shares in the said apostolic charges, as is proved by all the rituals of the Latin Church, as well as all the euchologies of the Greeks and Orientals. The same is unanimously taught by all the Fathers of both Churches. Among the Latin Fathers, S. Ambrose (Lib. 2, de Pœnit. c. 2) says : "It seems to be impossible that through penance sins should be forgiven. This, however, was granted by Jesus Christ to the Apostles, and from the Apostles it has been transmitted to the priests." And S. Chrysostom, the great light of the Oriental Church, says : "Those who dwell on earth are enabled to dispense the things of heaven : to them power is given, which neither angels or archangels enjoy ; for to these was not said, *whatsoever you shall bind on earth, is bound in heaven.* Earthly princes have power to cast into prison, but their power is restrained to bodies only ; whereas the power of the priesthood binds the souls, and reaches to heaven, so much so, that what priests do below, God ratifies above ; and the master confirms the sentence of his servants. And what is this, but that all power over the concerns of heaven has

been intrusted to them? *Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you retain, they are retained.* What power can be greater than this? God the Father has given all power of judging to His Son, and the *Son has communicated all that very power to priests.*" Hence, the Council of Trent (sess. 14, de Poenit. cap. 5) says, that "Jesus Christ left the priests vicars of himself, as presidents and judges to whom all mortal crimes (into which the faithful had fallen) are to be referred." But in order that the priest may exercise this office with prudence and discretion, and avoid error in a matter of such consequence, it is necessary that the sins be known by him, and that the sinner himself should open the whole of his conscience, and show it frankly and openly to the appointed judge of his soul, from whom he seeks absolution. As no judge can release, reprieve, censure, or condemn, with any form or semblance of justice, unless he has previously obtained a full knowledge of the cause, and has been made acquainted with all the particulars of the subject under consideration; so, unless a sincere and spontaneous accusation of his own sins be made to the priest by the penitent, he is unable to exercise duly the office conferred upon him by Jesus Christ of absolving or not absolving sins. A comparison will better explain this truth. Let us suppose the case of a monarch, who, being

unable to administer justice in person among his subjects, calls the most virtuous and skilful of his kingdom, and says to them : Go through the different provinces of my kingdom to administer justice, and to this purpose I confer upon you my authority. I will absolve those whom you shall absolve, and I will condemn those whom you shall condemn. Invested with such a power, they hasten to their destination. Now, would they, as it were, by chance, and without any examination and hearing of witnesses, condemn some to death, some to prison, and set others at liberty ? Certainly not, because they well know that when the sovereign told them that he would approve whatever they approved, he meant to say : Go, but judge well ; make investigation into each respective case ; take a diligent cognizance beforehand of the crimes which come under your jurisdiction ; take into consideration the number and kind of them, and consider the circumstances which accompanied these same crimes ; and before giving judgment make a serious reflection upon all particulars, so that your sentence be grounded upon justice and equity. The same conditions and form of justice are equally and indispensably annexed to the spiritual tribunal of penance, instituted by Jesus Christ ; since our Lord, in appointing the priests his vicegerents and judges of souls, has intrusted them with the responsibility of the sentences they have to pronounce of

loosing or binding; and hence, to acquit themselves of this grave duty, they ought to make a right judgment of the state of the penitent, and the penitent, by a necessary consequence, is bound by Jesus Christ himself to tell the priest in particular all his sins, and to show him the whole state of his conscience. Otherwise, how could the confessor judge that his penitent is in a proper disposition, or otherwise; to receive pardon? How could he form a right judgment of the state of his soul? The obligation of a proper disposition on the part of the penitent, is as certain as is the authority conferred by Jesus Christ upon the Apostles by the words quoted: “Receive the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them ; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.” Had it not been so, says S. Augustine, the words of Jesus Christ to the Apostles would have been *useless and void of any meaning*, and the power given by him to His Church *vain* and without *object or utility*. (Homil. 4, de 50 Horn.) Moreover, as the judge has to impose upon the culprit the penalty of the law, and this proportioned to his crimes, so the priest absolving the penitent from his sins has to impose upon him a penance proportioned to them. But how could the priest impose a proportionate penance, if the penitent does not make known to him all the faults into which he has fallen? Hence, the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. c. 5)

prescribes that the number and the circumstances which change the kind of sin, must be shown to the priest in confession, because otherwise the confessor could not rightly judge of the greatness of the crimes, nor could he impose the requisite penance for them. Neither does the confessor act only the part of judge, but also that of physician, having to prescribe congruous remedies to the faithful, whereby they may rise from the state of spiritual death to the life of grace, and preserve them from falling again, as the Council of Trent (sess. 14, de Poenit. c. 8) prescribes, saying : "The priest ought to enjoin fit and proper prescriptions for the security of a new life, for medicine for the disease, and for the punishment of the sins of the past life." But to act the part of physician, and prescribe remedies suitable for every disorder, it is required that each one should be made known to the spiritual doctor by the penitent's confession. Hence, all the Fathers of the Church unanimously acknowledge, in the aforesaid words of Jesus Christ, both the power given to the Apostles and their successors of absolving from sins, and the command to sinners to submit themselves to the priest, and make known to him all their sins, in order to receive absolution and direction, as we shall hereafter more fully demonstrate.

Now, how can Protestants maintain that the power of the priests consists only in declaring that

the sinner is bound or loosed, and not in having power of really binding or loosing? Their assertion is contradictory to the natural signification of the words of Jesus Christ, who did not say to the priests, whatever you shall *declare bound or loosed*, but he said, whatever you shall *bind or loose* shall be bound or loosed. Therefore, it is clear that Jesus Christ gave them the power of *actually* binding and loosing. Indeed, the priests, according to the power received from Jesus Christ, are the porters or doorkeepers of heaven: but the office of a doorkeeper does not consist in declaring that the door is opened or shut, but in actually opening and shutting the door. It is in this that his office really consists. Likewise, the office of the priest in the tribunal of penance does not consist in stating that the gates of heaven are opened to the converted sinner, but in the *actual opening of the same* to the converted sinner, through the power of the keys, received from Jesus Christ. Indeed, the priests in this tribunal, performing a true judicial act, the sentence they pronounce upon sinners is not declaratory but *judicial*, as has been defined by the Council of Trent as follows: "Any one who should dare to say that the sacramental absolution of the priest is not an act of judgment, but a mere ministry of pronouncing and declaring that sins have been remitted to the penitent who believes that he has been absolved: let him be excommunicated." (sess. xiv. c. 9.)

SECTION II.

By Christ's ordinance, there is no other ordinary way in Christianity for the remission of sins than Sacramental Confession.

The doctrine of Protestants upon justification by faith, by simple contrition, or by confession made only to God, is false and heretical, because it contradicts the clear word of God, the tradition of the whole ancient Church, and the perpetual teaching of the same. It has already been shown, that Jesus Christ, by those words, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained," established a tribunal of judgment, and that the Apostles, and the bishops and priests, their successors, should be the judges, in order to absolve or retain sins, according to the dispositions of the penitents. Now, if a sinner could obtain pardon by some other means, without being obliged to present himself at the tribunal of penance, it would follow that such a tribunal would be no longer necessary, and the power given to the priests would become illusory and of no effect. For any one would prefer to make an act of faith, of sorrow, of humility before God alone, than to have the pain and trouble of going to a confessor for absolution of his sins.

Or, suppose that a penitent, having confessed his sins to a priest, was found unfit for absolution through want of the required dispositions—for instance, in not wishing to pardon his enemy, or to make restitution of stolen things, or to avoid the proximate occasion of falling into sin—such a penitent could say to the confessor : “Well, as you decline to give me absolution, I recur to God directly, I repent before Him, and I shall obtain absolution from Him without your ministry.” He would be entitled to say so, if there were other means of obtaining absolution independently of the apostolic ministry. Hence, S. Augustine says : “Let no one say I secretly do penance before God ; God, who forgives me, knows what passes in my heart. If it be so, then without reason has it been said : ‘Whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven ;’ without reason the keys have been given to the Church. Therefore, we frustrate the Gospel—we frustrate the words of Christ.” (Sermon 392.)

The inadmissibility of such an assumption by Protestants, to waive the necessity of confession, will appear more evident by considering the *metaphor of the keys* used by Jesus Christ to express the power he conferred on the priests of the Church. For as a locked house cannot be opened but by him who keeps the key, so there is no other means left to open the gates of heaven, shut by sin, save

the sacerdotal ministry. This is the only key which by divine disposition opens and shuts heaven ; there is no other key that can open it ; and this *unique key* was given by Jesus Christ to his Apostles and their lawful successors in the holy ministry. But to what purpose would such a power of opening the gates of heaven have been given to the priests, if it were possible to enter them without being opened by their ministry ? Hence, the above doctrine of Protestants contradicts the *clear word of God*. It is true that perfect contrition may justify the sinner, but it is equally certain, from the Council of Trent, that perfect contrition cannot produce the justification of the sinner, unless it be accompanied by a sincere desire of going to confession, if time and opportunity were afforded him. Here are the words of the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. cap. 4) : "Although such a contrition sometimes is perfect, and operates the reconciliation of the man to God before he actually receives this sacrament ; nevertheless, such a reconciliation is not to be ascribed to the said contrition, without the desire of receiving the sacrament in which it is included." The same is proved by the tradition of the Church. The holy Fathers unanimously maintain that it is not enough to confess sins to God, but that it is necessary to go to the priest of God, to confess them to him, and to receive absolution from him. S. Basil says : "It is necessary to

confess sins to him to whom has been committed the dispensation of the mysteries of God." (Regul. Brev. Int. 288.) S. Bernard likewise says: "After baptism, there is no other remedy (for the forgiveness of sins) than the refuge of confession" (De Int. Domo. E. 21); and S. Thomas adds, "Confession is absolutely necessary for the salvation of those who fall into mortal sin." (Suppl. 3 part, qu. 6, Art. 1.) The Council of Constance, in the year 1415, in the eighteenth session, condemned the seventh proposition of Wycliffe, in which it was said that, when a man is duly repentant, confession becomes unnecessary and useless. Leaving aside other testimonies, which may be found in the chap. iii. 2 sect., we shall content ourselves with quoting the authority of the Council of Trent, stating: "As baptism is necessary for those who are not regenerated, so the sacrament of penance is necessary for the salvation of those who after baptism fall into sin." (sess. xiv. de Poenit. c. 2.)

SECTION III.

Protestant Evidences of the same Truth.

The doctrine just stated is acknowledged by Protestants, nay, by the very chief of the so-called Reformation, who gives evidence against them-

selves. The Father of the Reformation, Luther (vol. viii. p. 512, Jena, 1646), speaks in this way : "We must willingly admit that penance, with the power of absolving, or the power of the keys, is a sacrament, because it is founded in the promise of Jesus Christ, and grants the remission of sins in His name." And the same (vol. v. p. 233, Jena) adds : "Observe what is meant by the keys—a priesthood, an authority, or an order which God has given to Christianity, the object of which is to remit or to retain, through Jesus Christ, the sins of mankind. . . . Rely on the words of Jesus Christ, and be assured that God does not remit sin *otherwise* than by the *living voice of man*, as He Himself has ordained it. If you do not seek the remission of your sins in the living word, you will look in vain to heaven to obtain its grace, or as it is called *interior remission*." And the same (vol. i. p. 63, Jena) says : "The august and holy sacrament of penance, that abundant source of grace, is *the only means* which the divine mercy selected to pour grace and consolation into the heart of the sinner, when the keys were given to S. Peter, the representative of the whole Christian Church."

Calvin (3rd Book of Institutions, chap. 4) says : "By means of private confession, pardon is obtained from those to whom Christ has said : all that you shall have loosed and remitted on earth, shall be loosed and remitted in heaven."

Melancthon (2nd Book Oper. Inst. fol. 450) says : “Absolution, by which the power of the keys in particular and in secret remit sins, is good and profitable before God, and being so, confession is to be retained in which absolution is asked.”

The Centurists of Magdeburg (whose writings are, by English Protestants, affirmed to be an *excellent work of immortal memory*) (Cent. iii. c. 6, c. 1, 127) confess that “in these times of Cyprian and Tertullian was used private confession, even of thoughts and lesser sins, (which was) commanded and thought necessary.”

Lombehius, Professor in the University of Rostock, *Andrews Arthemerus*, *Jacobus Helburnerus*, and other sundry Protestants, are alleged by Brerely (Tract iii. sec. i.) as acknowledging in the priests the power not only to pronounce but to *give remission* of sins.

Flaccius Illiricus, the principal of the said Centurists, having found an ancient Liturgic manuscript, published it on the title *Missa Latina*, and in the dedication of it to the Prince Palatine of the Rhine, says that the said manuscript contained the Liturgy used in Rome at the time of S. Gregory. Well, in that manuscript, the practice of auricular confession is confirmed. (Leiconte, Eccl. Annal. Franc. tom. 2, a. 601, p. 20.)

Chemnitius (2 part. Exam. page 960) teaches that “perfect sorrow or contrition is not sufficient without **absolution**.”

Spar (a Cambridge man) printed a sermon to prove the necessity of confession.

Sacerdos (in loc. com. de Conf. fol. 282) says : “ It is an error to maintain that it is sufficient confession to be made before God. This error takes away the use of the keys and the absolution. It is, therefore, falsely maintained that confession that is made before God should take away private confession.”

Dumoulin (*de la Nouveauté du Papisme*) thus expresses himself : “ Particular confession made to a priest is very ancient, and when public penance was in use, sinners confessed in particular to their pastors, who then prepared them for public penance if they deserved it, or otherwise dispensed them from it.”

Bishop Montague (Appel. chap. 32) speaks thus : “ Secret confession made to the priest is a very ancient practice in the Church, and an excellent and most profitable custom. We do not refuse it to any one who asks it, and is in need of it ; nay, we rather exhort the people to make it, and prescribe it to the dying.”

Bishop Andrews (Sermon upon S. John, xx. 23), urging what S. Augustine says in the Hom. 49, concludes : “ confession to a priest is necessary ;” and (Serm. preached to the court of James I.) says : “ Whosoever sins you remit, they shall be

remitted. The command of God being thus given, it is not in our power to restrict it."

Archbishop Cranmer explicitly says : " God doth not speak to us with a voice sounding out of heaven. But He hath given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the authority to forgive sin, to the ministers of the Church. Wherefore, let him that is a sinner go to one of them ; let him acknowledge and confess his sin, and pray him that, according to God's commandment, he will give him absolution, and comfort him with the word of grace and forgiveness of his sins. And when the minister doth so, I ought steadfastly to believe that my sins are truly forgiven in heaven." (Art. 8, Cranmer's Works, tom. iv. p. 281, third edition. Jenkyns.)

Bishop Latimer says : " To speak of right and true confession, I would it were kept in England." (Sermon on the 3rd Sunday after Eph.)

Hooker says : For private confession and absolution stand thus with us : " that the priest's power to absolve is publicly taught and professed ; and the Church not deemed to have authority either of abridging or enlarging the use and exercise of that power." (Eccl. Pol. vi. 4-15.)

Bishop Jeremy Taylor says : " The Church of God in all ages hath commanded, and in most cases enjoined, that we should confess our sins and discover the state and condition of our souls to such

a person as we, or our superiors, judge fit to help us in such needs." ("Holy Living," chap. iv. s. 9, of Repentance, p. 259, Ed. Heb.)

Bishop Overall says : "Confession of sins must necessarily be made to them to whom the dispensation of the mysteries of God is committed. For so they, which in former days repented amongst the saints, are said to have done." Again : "Venial sins, which separate not from the grace of God, need not so much trouble a man's conscience. If we have committed any mortal sin, then we require confession of it to a priest." (Apud. Gresley, "The Ordinance of Confession," p. 51, second edition : London, 1852.)

Archbishop Usher says : "We tell him again that by the public order prescribed in our Church before the administration of the holy communion, the minister likewise doth exhort the people, that if there be any of them which cannot quiet his own conscience, but requireth further comfort or counsel, he should come to him, or some other discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his griefs. Be it therefore known unto him, that no kind of confession, either public or private, is disallowed by us, that is in any way requisite for the due execution of that ancient power of the keys which Christ bestowed upon the Church." (Answer to a Jesuit, ap. Gresley, *loc. cit.* page 51.)

Archbishop Wake says : "The Church of Eng-

land refuses no sort of confession, either public or private, which may be any way necessary to the quieting men's consciences, or to exercising that power of binding or loosing which our Saviour Christ has left in His Church." Item : " We have our penitential canons for public offenders. We exhort men, if they have the least doubt or scruple—nay, sometimes, though they have none, but especially before they receive the holy sacrament, to confess their sins. We propose to them the benefit, not only of ghostly advice, how to manage their repentance, but the great comfort of absolution too, as soon as they shall have completed it. . When we visit our sick, we never fail to exhort them to make a special confession of their sins to him that ministers to them. If God had appointed His angels or His saints to absolve me, as He hath His ministers, I would confess to them. . . . Men come not willingly to this manifestation of themselves ; and when they have done it, the absolution is so full, that the Church of Rome itself could not desire to add anything to it." (Ap. Gresley, *loc. cit.* p. 32.)

Archbishop Sharpe says: "Confession to a minister . . . is always lawful, and sometimes highly expedient; and if people amongst us did more practise it, there is no doubt they could find both great comfort and great benefit thereby. (Tom. 5, Serm. 11, 12, ed. 1733.)

Donne says: "This is the sacrament of confession, so we may call it with a safe conscience, that is, the mystery of confession ; for confession is a mysterious thing." (Ap. Gresley, *loc. cit.* p. 53.)

Heylin says : " For confession to be made to the priest, it is agreeable both to the doctrine and intent of the Church of England, though not so much to the practice as it ought to be." (Ap. Gresley, *loc. cit.* p. 54.)

Bingham says: "If we would be secure, we must use God's ordinances as He has appointed them ; join the outward and the inward act together ; let the repentance and obedience of our souls prepare the way for the ministry of His priests ; and then what sins they remit on earth will be remitted in heaven." (Ap. Gresley, *loc. cit.* p. 34.)

Bishop Sparrow says : "He that would be secure of pardon, let him seek out a priest and make his humble confession to him ; for God, who alone hath the prime and original right of forgiving sins, hath delegated the priests His judges here on earth, and given them the power of absolution ; so that they can in His name forgive the sins of those that humbly confess unto them." (Sermon before the University of Cambridge, A.D. 1637.)

But to omit other testimonies, we observe that it is a common inquiry, that should be made by the bishops of the Established Church in the visitation of their dioceses, to ask if any person

sick, or in health, finding his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, goes to confession, and the minister, upon his repentance, administers to him absolution, with ghostly counsels and advice. So it is found in the visitation of Bishop Overall, 1619; of Bishop Andrews, 1629; of Bishop Montague, 1638; of Bishop Wren, 1662; and of Bishop Gunning, 1679.

It is also reported that Hooker and Saraira confessed to each other, and that Bishop Sanderson, on his deathbed, called his chaplain to give him the absolution. (*Bishop of Exeter's Pastoral*, p. 74.)

In conclusion, it is to be heard from the mouth of two eminent prelates of the Church of England, the cause why confession was let aside in the Establishment, as has been related in the work entitled "An Important Enquiry on the Nature of a Church Reformation," London, 1751, c. iv. p. 115, with the following words: "When the Duchess of York, first wife to King James II., justly scrupuling on this very point, opened her difficulties to two eminent prelates of the Church of England, Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Blandford, Bishop of Worcester, they undertook to resolve her no otherwise than by candidly owning that *confession* was undoubtedly a means of grace of Christ's institution; that they wished so effectual a help to salvation had been retained within the Reformed Churches, and bemoaned so

material an omission as the effect of hurry and precipitation with which the work of the Reformation was conducted."

Now, after so many proofs we have quoted from the mouths of the chiefs of Protestantism in favour of confession, we think we have a right to say that any dispute with them might be at an end. Indeed, according to S. Ireneus (*Adv. Hær. lib. 4, c. 14*), the proof which is taken from the mouth of adversaries is the best one we may have; and Tertullian (*Apolog.*) says: "Nobody tells lies to his dishonour, but rather to his honour; and deserves more to be believed when he confesses against himself, than when he denies in his favour." Cicero also (*Orat. p. qu.*) says: "Testimonium tuum quod aliena re leve est, hoc contra te grave;" and the same principle is acknowledged by Protestant writers. Whittaker (*de Eccl. contr. 2 qu. sing. 14*) says accordingly: "The argument must be strong which is taken from the confession of the adversaries, for the confession against themselves is effectual;" and Peter Martyr (*Comm. pl. part 2, p. 327*) also says: "Doubtless, among all testimonies, that testimony is of greatest account which is testified by the enemies."

CHAPTER III.

THE DIVINE INSTITUTION OF CONFESSION ACKNOWLEDGED BY CHRISTIANS OF ALL PERSUASIONS, AND THE PRACTICE THEREOF MAINTAINED AMONG THE SAME IN ALL AGES OF THE CHURCH.

SECTION I.

The Divine Institution of the Sacrament of Penance proved by the practice of it at the time of the Apostles.

PRIVATE or auricular confession began to be practised in the very age of the Apostles; for in the Acts (xix. 18) we find that S. Paul, being in Ephesus, many of the Christians went to him for confession—“many of them that believed came confessing and declaring their deeds;” upon which it is to be observed, in the first place, that the word “came” means that such confessions were made not merely before God, but also before the minister of God, that is, S. Paul. In the second place, the words “confessing and declaring their deeds,” indicate that such confessions were performed not in a general way, but *specifically*, by telling the sins one

by one in particular, according to their number and kind. Indeed, in the Syriac version, published by Walton, this text is thus translated: "Denounced their own faults, and confessed of all they had done." In fine, the Greek word *πράξεις* shows clearly that the above text speaks of a specific and detailed accusation made to the ear of the Apostles. Hence it is clear, that even at the time of the Apostles the faithful fulfilled the command of Jesus Christ, of going to confession, and that the Apostles exercised the power of absolving on them. From the same Acts it also appears, that the above Christians, after confession, burnt the bad books they had read, and they did so although such books had cost them much. This shows the duty which requires the repented sinner to remove such occasions as may lead him again to the former sin, though it may cost him pain and loss of property. Had not confession been commanded by Jesus Christ, the Christians of Ephesus certainly would not have made their confession, nor burnt the books which had cost much, neither would S. Paul have engaged himself in hearing their confession.

SECTION II.

The same Divine Ordinance borne witness to by the Fathers of the Church.

The fact, and a very consoling one, of the divine institution of the sacrament of penance, is borne witness to by all the Fathers of the Church. This tradition shows evidently all the marks that, according to S. Augustine (*Lib. iv. cont. Donat.*), form the true character of an apostolic tradition. It has not sprung from any ordinance of the Church, of which the author or the beginning may be found ; it has passed without the least interruption through all ages and all Churches, and has arrived, as it were, from hand to hand to us. Among all the testimonies, we shall select only a few taken from different ages. Tertullian, in the second century (*De Poenit. c. xii.*), says : “If thou drawest back from confession (*exomologesim*), consider in thine heart that hell-fire which confession shall quench for thee.” Origen, in the third century (*t. ii. Select in Ps. 37, v. 6*), says : “As they who are troubled with indigestion, and have anything which is crude upon their stomachs, are not relieved but by proper evacuation ; so sinners who conceal their practices, and retain them within their own breasts, are almost choked by the malignity which they thus

suppress. But by confession and self-accusation they discharge themselves of their burden, and digest as it were the crudity which was so oppressive; only look diligently round to whom thou ought to confess thy sins. In the fourth century, S. Athanasius (*Frag. ex lib. cont. Novat.* l. 3, p. 75, and in *Montfaucon's Nova Collect.* t. 2, p. 103) says: "As man is illuminated with the grace of the Holy Ghost by the priest that baptizes, so also he who confesses in penitence receives through the priest, by the grace of Christ, the remission of sins." In the fifth century, S. Peter Chrysologus (*Serm.* 84): "He (J. C.) gave the power of forgiving sins. Where are the men who teach that sins cannot be forgiven men by men? Who impiously insults sinners with despair of a return? Peter forgives sins, and receives the penitent with joy, and avails himself of this power which God has granted to all priests." In the sixth century, S. Gregory the Great, explaining (*Homil.* 26) the words of the Gospel, "Lazarus, come out," says to the sinners: "Why do you conceal your sins in the depth of your conscience? Let them come out through confession." In the seventh century, S. Cesarius, Bishop of Arles (*Homil.* 7, *de Pœnit.*), compares sins to sickness, confession to medicine, the priest to the physician. In the eighth century, Ven. Bede (in *Epist. S. Jacob.*) says: "Let us discover to the priest the filth of the more grievous leprosy, and

by his direction let us endeavour to cleanse the soul." In the ninth century, S. Paulinus of Aquileia (Lib. 2, de Exhortat. ad Here. Duc. Foriul) reckons among the sins the reception of the holy eucharist without having previously been to confession being in the state of mortal sin : "I have received the body and blood of the Lord unworthily, without confession and penance." In the eleventh century, S. Peter Damian (Serm de St. And.) teaches : "Confession must be pure and simple, that is, we must not confess some of our sins and conceal others." In the twelfth century, S. Anselm (Opera, edit. Colon. p. 176) tells sinners "to go and show themselves sincerely to the priests by an humble confession of all the stains of their interior leprosy, in order to be cured." There would be nothing more easy for us than to add to the above testimonies of the holy Fathers a great many more to prove, by tradition, the divine institution of the sacrament of penance ; but we believe it enough to quote the testimony of the Fathers of the Council of Trent, who assert that all the Fathers of the Church have unanimously taught the same truth. These are the words of the Council (sess. xiv. c. 1) : "Our Lord then instituted the sacrament of penance, when after His resurrection He breathed on His Apostles, saying : *Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins, &c.* By which action so signal, and words so plain, the Fathers, by unanimous consent, have

always understood that the power of forgiving and of retaining sins, for the reconciling of the faithful, was communicated to the Apostles and their legitimate successors."

SECTION III.

General and Particular Councils of the Church bear witness to the same truth.

The fact of the divine institution of the sacrament of penance becomes still more evident from its having been acknowledged and inculcated to the faithful both by the universal and particular Churches united in synod. The Council of Laodicea, which took place about the year 366, in the second canon (apud Labbe, t. 1), commands that "those Christians should be admitted into the communion of the Church who, having fallen into sin, had given proof of perfect conversion by perseverance in prayer accompanied by *confession* and penance." (can. 2.) The first Council of Chalons (an. 644) commands priests to impose penance upon sinners, "after having heard their confession." The Council of Rheims (an. 639) ordains that "during Lent no priest, except the parish priest, should hear the confessions of the parishioners." The Council of Nantes (an. 656) commands that "the parish priest,

as soon as he has been informed of the serious sickness of any one of his parishioners, shall go to see the infirm person, and, after having blessed his room with holy water, shall cause every one to go out, and then shall admonish the sick man (or woman) to confess his sins." (can. 4.) The third Council of Constantinople (an. 692) supposes the practice of confession of sins, when it ordains "that the priest should examine diligently the quality and quantity of the sins, as well as the dispositions of the penitent, in order to give him sound remedies." (can. 102.) The first Council of Germany (an. 782) forbids ecclesiastics to go among the army, with the exception of "those only who are necessary for the celebration of the holy mysteries, for the propagation of the devotion to sacred relics and images of saints, and those who are appointed to hear confessions." (can. 2.) The Council of Colchester, in England (an. 787), over which presided the legates of Pope Adrian I., commands "that no one should go to communion unless he had submitted himself to the judgment of the priest, and shown fruits worthy of penance;" and also, "should it happen that some one die without having been to *confession*, no prayer should be made for him." (can. 20.) The Council of Tours (an. 803), of Rheims (the same year), and Worms (an. 808), speak likewise of confession. The sixth Council of Paris (an. 820), whilst it forbids the priests to

frequent religious houses without necessity, "gives them permission to go there when they have to hear confessions of the nuns." The same Council inculcates to the bishops not to give permission to the priests to absent themselves from their churches, for the reason "that sometimes the faithful die without confession." (can. 2.) The Council of Pavia (850) ordains that public sinners have to perform a public penance; but that "those who have sinned in secret should go to such priests as the bishops have elected to be physicians for the curing of secret diseases." (Conc. Ticin. Labbe, t. 6.) Among the canons made in England under King Edgar, in the tenth century, there are several relative to confession, and the first of them is of the following tenor: "When some one desires to go to confession, let him take courage and strength, and not be ashamed to acknowledge his wickedness; for there is no pardon without confession: it is confession which heals and justifies." (Labbe, t. 9.) The Council of Constance (an. 1417) shows that confession is of divine institution, and necessary for salvation, by condemning the 7th Article of Wickliff, in which it was asserted that "when man is repentant, the confession of sins becomes superfluous and useless." In fine, the Council of Trent has spoken on the subject in this way: "The universal Church always understood that the entire confession of sins was instituted by our Lord, and

that this confession is by divine right necessary for all who fall after baptism ; for our Lord Jesus Christ, when about to ascend from earth into heaven, left the priests his vicars, as it were, presidents and judges, to whom all mortal crimes into which the faithful of Christ may fall must be referred, in order that they may pronounce according to the power of the keys of remission or retention of sin. For it is plain that the cause being unknown to them, the priests could not exercise their judgment, neither could they keep equity in the enjoining of penance, if sins were only generally, and not specifically, declared unto them." (sess. xiv. cap. 5.) And the same Council passes on to excommunicate any one who should deny this doctrine, saying : "Any one who shall deny that sacramental confession was instituted by Jesus Christ, or that it is necessary to salvation, or shall say that the practice of secret confession to the priest, which practice the Catholic Church has observed from the beginning, and now observes, is foreign to the institution and command of Christ, and is a human invention : let him be anathema." (can. 6.)

SECTION IV.

Penitential Canons bear witness to the same fact.

There are two ancient penitential books of the Catholic Church, from which the practice of confession is shown. The one is of John Dijunator, Patriarch of Constantinople, written at the end of the sixth century, and copied by John Morinus from a manuscript five hundred years old. Now, there are in it questions which the priest ought to put to the penitent in sacramental confession, and in them the kind and number of sins are specified. Moreover, the penitent is admonished to confess clearly all the sins, even the most hidden ones, that he has committed ; and he must do it, if he would avoid hell, and enter heaven. Here is a small extract from the book : "My spiritual son, it is not I that principally receive your confession, and give you absolution, but it is God Himself, who does it through me. Discover, therefore, and declare, in the presence of the holy angels, everything that you have secretly perpetrated, as if you had to confess to God Himself, who already knows the secret of your heart. Although it may cause you shame to reveal what was but too shameful to have committed, nevertheless be persuaded that you through this shame will free yourself from future shame,

and being obedient to what is commanded, you shall be worthy, not only of pardon, but also of a crown." The other penitential book is of Egbert, the Archbishop of York, who wrote it about the year 732, from the canons of the old Fathers, and which book the above-mentioned Morinus copied from a manuscript six hundred years old. In this penitential book there is to be found the rule to be followed by the penitent as well as by the confessor, if he has not admonished his penitents as he should have done, and had not had such care and zeal for them as his duty required. These formulas of confessions regard not only sins committed by deed and words, but also by simple thoughts, as is the following : "I have sinned by bad thoughts ; I have taken pleasure in them, and consented to them." Hence, from the above penitential books, the practice of auricular confession in the early age of the Church is discovered.

SECTION V.

The same is proved by History.

A new proof that auricular confession is of divine right, and binding on all Christians who sin after baptism, is to be found in history, as it is shown from this that in every age of the Church, and

among all ranks and conditions of persons, confession has been used.

I shall omit to produce the monuments of the first four centuries of the Church, to prove that in that time confession was used, as it appears by the testimonies already quoted, and also because Gibbon, one of the most bitter enemies of Catholicism, the author of the work "*On the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*," admits that confession, along with the other principal points of the Catholic faith, were believed and practised in the whole period of the four first ages. Here are his words : "A well-informed man cannot resist the weight of historical evidence, which establishes that in the whole period of the four first ages of the Church the principal points of the papistical doctrines were already admitted in theory and practice." (Mem. tom. i. chap. 1.) Hence our demonstration will begin from the fifth century.

In the first place, it appears that *bishops* and *priests* went to confession. Isodorus, Bishop of Seville (sec. vii.), being at the point of death, assisted by two bishops, begged one of them to put on him haircloth, and the other to cover him with ashes; after which he made his confession, and asked absolution. ("*Eloges des Evêques*," par Godeau.)

In the life of S. Beltufe, Bishop (sec. vii.), it has been related that his relics having to be translated, the priests to perform this function duly went to

confession, after which they approached the tomb of the saint. (2 Part, sec. 2. Bened. p. 59.)

The religious, both *monks* and *nuns*, went to confession in their convents. In the life of Philibert, founder and Abbot of Jumiege (sec. vii.), it is related that the saint, finding one of his monks near death, having lost the power of speech, and knowing by some signs that the dying monk was in the state of mortal sin, began to pray to God for him ; and his prayer having been heard, the monk recovered the use of his speech, made his confession, and then died in peace. Theodorus the Studite, in the life of S. Platon, relates that the saint “confessed the hidden thoughts of his mind, and all his actions, in such a perfect manner, that his confessor was astonished at it.” From the acts of the seventh Council of Paris, in the year 829, it appears that nuns had their particular confessors.

But not only bishops, priests, monks, and nuns used to go to confession, but also the *secular persons* of every rank, sex, and condition. First, *emperors*, *kings*, and *queens* went to confession. Of the Emperor Constantine, Eusebius says, that towards the end of his life, prostrating himself upon his knees, confessed his sins in the house of the martyrs. (Euseb. de Vita Constantin, lib. iv. c. 61.) From the Acts of the Order of S. Benedict, collected by Mabillon, it appears that for the period of one hundred years—that is, from the year 700 to 800—monks were

principally selected to be the confessors of the sovereigns. In the sixth century, S. Ausbert, Archbishop of Rouen, was the confessor of Theodoric III., King of France. In the seventh century, S. Viron, Bishop of Ruremonda, was the confessor of Pepin, the father of Charles Martel. S. Aidan, Bishop of Waterford, heard the confessions of Brandubh, King of Ireland, after having raised him from death, as appears from his life. In the eighth century, Martin, monk of Corbie, was the confessor of Charles Martel. Harlemond, Bishop of Mans, was the confessor of Pepin. S. Corbinian, first Bishop of Frising, heard the confessions of Grimoald, Duke of Bavaria. Humbert was the confessor of Offa, King of Mercia. In the ninth century, S. Aldersch, Bishop of Mans, and S. Ansovino, Bishop of Camerino, were successively the confessors of Louis le Debonnaire, King of France, and Emperor of the East. The Bishop Donatus Scot was the confessor of Lotarius, son of Louis, and his successor to the kingdom of France. In the tenth century, Uldaric, Bishop of Augsburg, was the confessor of the Emperor Otho. Didacus Fernand was the confessor of Ordogna, King of Spain. In the eleventh century, Queen Constantia, wife of Robert, King of France, had for her confessor a priest of the diocese of Orleans, called Stephen. S. Peter Damian (Opusc. 56) relates that Agnes Augusta, mother of Henry IV., being in Rome, made before the altar

of the Princes of the Apostles a general minute confession of her whole life. In the twelfth century, Henry I., King of England, had for his confessor Atedull, prior of S. Oswald.

Confessions were heard in the *army*. Charlemagne, King of France, and Emperor of the West, in the Capitulars of the year 806, ordains that every prefect or colonel should have a priest to hear the confessions of the soldiers. Arnulphus, besieging Rome in the year 895, the soldiers went to confession to the priest. (*Annals of Fulda.*) William of Malmesburg, in the twelfth century, praises the Norman soldiers, because, on the night previous to the battle with the English, they went to confession and communion. (*lib. 3, De Gestis Angl. c. 14.*) The Duke Conrad, in the year 955, before beginning the battle with the Hungarians, heard mass, and received the holy communion from the hands of Olderic, his confessor. Alcuin, writing to one of his friends who was going with the army against the enemy, exhorts him not to forget before starting to fortify himself with confession. (*Alc. Epist. 46.*)

The faithful used to go to confession in great dangers, as it appeared when the town of S. Omer, being besieged by the Normans, the inhabitants, to obtain the aid of God, purified themselves by the sacraments of confession and communion. (*Life of S. Bertin, Book iii. c. 7.*)

They made their confession before receiving the

holy communion. In the sixth century, Anastasius of Sina, a monk, preaching to the people, exhorted them (*Homil. de Synaxi*) to purify themselves from sin by confession, adding : “*Confess therefore your sins to Jesus Christ through the priests.*” Paulinus, Patriarch of Aquileja (S. Paulini Opera, vet. 1737, sec. viii.) says likewise that, “before approaching holy communion, *recourse must be had to confession and penance.*” S. Firmin (*Serm. in S. Script.*), who lived about the same time, says that “those who had committed grievous sins, do not presume to go to the holy altar before having been to confession, and done penance according to the discretion of the priest.” But to omit other testimonies, it suffices to state that, among the formularies for confession left to us by the ancient Fathers, there is one as follows : “I accuse myself of having received the body and blood of our Saviour unworthily, without having prepared myself for it by confession and penance,” as may be seen in the formula of S. Fulgentius, who died in the beginning of the sixth century. (*Apud Morinum.*) From this it is clear that the faithful always acknowledged it as their indispensable duty to go to confession before going to communion, when their souls were not clean from mortal sin.

Confession was used also by the faithful before receiving the sacrament of *confirmation.* Havard, Archbishop of Tours (tom. i. Capit. Reg. Franc. c.

75, sec. ix.), published a statute, in which he commanded the persons who were to receive confirmation, to prepare themselves for it by confession, in order to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The ancient faithful used to go to confession, especially *in Lent*, and on the *principal feasts* of the Church. Chrodogand, Bishop of Metz, who died in the year 667 (Reg. Chronolog. c. 32), ordered that religious should go to confession every Saturday, and that laymen should go in the three Lents—namely, before Easter, before the Feast of S. John the Baptist, and before Christmas. Regino, Abbot of the monastery of Prum, in the diocese of Treves, who died about the year 909 (Regino de Discipl. Eccl. lib. ii.), produced a regulation of the Council of Rouen, in which it was imposed on the bishops, in visiting their dioceses, to ask “if there were any person in that parish, who for a full year had not been to confession, or who had not performed this duty during Lent.” S. Egbert, Archbishop of York, who died in the eighth century (Dial. Egbert, tom. v. Concil. Lat.), bears witness that in England it was the custom, since the time of Pope Vitalian (sec. vii.), and religiously maintained, that not only ecclesiastics, but also laymen, should go to confession with their family at Christmas, that they might receive duly the communion of the Lord on that day.

The same was practised by those who aspired to begin a *better life*. In the seventh century, S.

Sillon, monk of Solignac (apud Bolland. die 7 Junii), wishing to become a saint, "made his confession to a priest of all his faults committed from his youth." It is related by Ven. Bede (Hist. tom. iv. c. 25) of a man at that time very pious, named Adaman, who gave up himself to God "after having confessed to a priest a sin which he had committed in his youth." S. Bavon, patron of Ghent (sec. vi. Bibl. Sac. tom. 14, p. 205), having been struck by the preaching of S. Amand, went to confession to him, and began to do penance for his sins.

In *serious illness*, and especially when *near death*, they made their confession. In the life of S. Sanson, Bishop of Dol (sec. vi.) (sec. i. Benedict), it has been written that his father, being grievously ill, "confessed a sin which he had till that moment concealed." S. Boniface, the apostle of Germany (sec. viii. Epist. 19), in a letter sent to Ethelbald, King of Mercia, says that "King Ceolred, his predecessor, having died without doing penance and going to confession, had gone to hell." In the life of S. Vigbert, Abbot of Fritzer (sec. viii.) (Act. Secul. iii. Benedict), it is found that "he went out from his monastery in order to go to hear the confessions of the sick who wanted to see him." In the same century, Matilda, wife of the Emperor Henry (Bolland, 14 Martii), "went to confession to William, Archbishop of Mayence, a few days before she died."

Finally, the poor culprits *condemned to death* went to confession before their execution. In the life of S. Corbinianus (sec. viii.), written by Ariboe, Bishop of Frisingen (1 pars. sec. iii. Benedict, P. I., p. 104), it is found that this zealous prelate obtained the conversion of a criminal “by making a pure and sincere confession.” Another fact of the same kind has been related by Gregory of Tours (sec. vi.), at the time of King Chilperic, on the death of Daccon, made prisoner, “who prepared himself for death by making his confession.” (Aimoin, lib. iii. c. 25.)

Now, from the whole we have related, it appears that persons of every sex, rank, and condition, in all times, used to go to confession. Is not this historical fact a clear proof that confession is commanded by divine right? For how could persons so different in rank, social condition, climate, manners of thinking, &c., who naturally shrank from confession as a heavy and humiliating yoke, be induced to adopt and practise it, had it not been imposed by an authority superior to that of man? Hence the history of nineteen centuries certifies that auricular confession was instituted and commanded by Jesus Christ.

SECTION VI.

The same is stated by Schismatic and Protestant Sects.

When a contrasted truth can boast in its favour the testimony of its opponents, it appears that nothing more can be desired, in order to pronounce the dispute to be at an end. Now, this is the case with regard to the truth we are defending, since those very innovators who deny in one way or other the necessity of confession as a divine institution, nevertheless affirm it by their own mouth, as we had already remarked, by quoting in our support *individual* Protestant evidences. In the present section we advance to show that the same divine institution of confession is admitted also by the *churches or sects*, both schismatic and Protestants.

It is a fact that the oriental sects of Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, and others, keep up the practice of auricular confession, as appears from their euchologies and rituals, and has been demonstrated by Assemani (Bibl. Orient. tom. 3, l. 2, pref. c. 8), and the author of the work, "La Perpetuité de la Foi." (tom. v. l. 3, c. 3.) The same has been demonstrated by Hassalins (Capitul. Eccl. Cop.), with regard to the Coptics and Ethiopes; and by Morinus, in reference to the Egyptians and other

orientals. It is also a fact, that the said oriental sects did not introduce the practice of confession after their separation from Catholic unity ; therefore, they brought it from the Catholic Church. Now, from this fact, a twofold proof in favour of confession must be acknowledged : first, that auricular confession was practised in the Catholic Church when the above sects separated themselves from her, that is, twelve hundred years ago ; secondly, that these rebel daughters of the Catholic Church, in separating themselves from their mother, far from abolishing confession, retained it during twelve hundred years, and still retain and acknowledge it as necessary by divine appointment, in order to return to God's grace after mortal sin. Had not confession been instituted by Jesus Christ, they certainly would not have kept it themselves at the time of their separation from the Catholic Church.

With regard to the Arminians, after being converted to Christianity by S. Gregory Illuminator, under the Pope S. Sylvester, they became schismatics in the sixth century, under Patriarch Narses. Now, although separated from the Catholic Church, they retain and preserve the practice of confession, like the Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, and others, although, on account of the ignorance of the priests, some abuses had been introduced. In the Synod of Trull, although they were accused of several

errors, nothing was said with regard to confession, because they kept it invariably. The form of absolution used by Nestorian schismatics is as follows : “God, who loves you, grant you this mercy, and give you pardon for the sins you have confessed, as also for those you have forgotten ; and I, through the authority which I hold by the sacerdotal order, in consequence of the divine word, ‘ Whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,’ with the same word absolve you from all the sins you have committed by thought, word, and deed : in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Let. Edit. tom. iv. p. 248.) From this form of absolution, brought by them from the Catholic Church, it follows that the Arminian schismatics acknowledge that confession was practised in the Catholic Church in the sixth century, when they abandoned it ; that God gave to the priests the power of forgiving sins ; and that confession has been and is still retained by them as necessary by divine institution.

In the ninth century, the Greeks left the Latin Church ; nevertheless, they retained and still retain the practice of confession as necessary by divine institution, admitting that Jesus Christ gave to the priests the power of absolving from sins, as appears from the form of absolution contained in their Euchologium, which is as follows : “ Grant (God) to Thy servant pardon of the sins he has committed,

forgiving him, through me, Thy unworthy servant, every spontaneous and involuntary crime ; for Thou didst say to Thy divine and holy disciples and Apostles : ‘ Receive the Holy Ghost : whose sins you shall remit, shall be remitted ; and whose sins you shall retain, shall be retained ; ’ and ‘ whatsoever you shall bind or loose on earth, shall be bound or loosened in heaven.’” Moreover, they still keep the Penitential of John II., Patriarch of Constantinople, in which, besides the eucologies, the *rite of auricular confession* is given, as has been observed by Allatius (De Consens. Eccles. lib. 3) and by Morinus. (lib. 3.) The Russian Church, also, framed upon the Greek Church, from which it differs only on account of the language which is used in the liturgy, professing the dogmas and retaining the discipline and usages of the same Greek Church, keeps *auricular confession* as an article of faith, and a practical obligation. Likewise, in the collection of the principal liturgies of the oriental Churches, of M. Renaudot and P. Le Brun (Dublin, 1822), in a dialogue between an American priest and a European Protestant (page 124), it is said : “Not only our American nation, but that of Asiatic Churches, both believe and admit seven mysteries or sacraments of the Church. Such is our belief, as well as that of the Greeks, Georgians, Russians, Syrians, Copts, and others.” Item : “Any person who desires to go to communion, must, in the first place, confess

his sins to the priest with contrition of heart, and receive absolution for them."

But not only schismatics, but also Protestant sects, bear witness to the necessity of sacramental confession as a divine ordinance. The Church of England directs those of her persuasion to go to confession at least on two occasions—the one, when they are going to receive communion, and find their conscience troubled with "*any weighty matter*," which is called by us mortal sin ; the other, when they find themselves at the *point of death*. Among other instructions laid down in the order for the visitation of the sick, it is thus enjoined : "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter ; after which confession, the priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it)." Let us hear what a Protestant writer, William Gresley, M.A., in his work, "The Ordinance of Confession" (London, 1852, p. 7), says on the subject : "No Church on earth more distinctly recognizes the principle both of confession and absolution, than the Church of England does. We are quite sure that our Church does not consider it improper or unnecessary, or an undue assumption of authority on the part of the priest, to hear confession and give absolution. On the contrary, she gives most positive directions on the subject. It is

not left to the sick person's own suggestion. He shall be "*moved*" to make a special confession : the priest is not to wait until the sick man makes the proposal, but is himself to suggest the propriety of confession ; and the confession is to be *special*, not a general confession of unworthiness, an acknowledgment that he is a miserable sinner, and that he has done many things which he ought not to have done, and left undone many which he ought to have done. This is not the confession which he is to be moved to make, but a special confession of the *particular sins* of which he has been guilty. And so in the exhortation to communicants, every time the communion is announced, the minister is directed to invite all persons who have been guilty of sins which disquiet their conscience . . . to go to some discreet minister of God's word, and open their grief, *i.e.*, make confession of their sins, in order that they may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice. . . . From what has been said, it is surely beyond a doubt, that the Church of England recognizes the principle of confession, and enjoins its practice." Of course, we cannot admit the apostolic succession, and the power of jurisdiction or mission in the Church of England, and, consequently, the power of absolving from sin ; but we are very glad to hear a Protestant minister

of our own time, speaking so clearly of the necessity of confession, according to the principles of the same Church of England. Indeed, the Established Church, from her beginning, has always kept the same doctrine, as appears from the many authorities quoted in the second chapter, section second, of this treatise. To these is to be added the declaration of Wilson, Protestant Bishop of Soder and Man (Prell. Modar. vol. 2, tract 62) : "She asserts, what is most true, that Christ's ministers have a special commission, which other believers have not, authoritatively to declare this absolution for the comfort of true penitents, and which absolution, if duly dispensed, will have a real effect from the promise of Christ." (John, xx. 23.) Likewise Kettlewell, an English divine ("On the Creed," tract 76), asks : "Is it (forgiveness) in signs and tokens outwardly dispensed ?" and he answers : "Yes, both in the holy sacraments, and in the sacerdotal absolution." Upon the same subject, the Anglican bishop, Jeremy Taylor, says : "You are advised by the Church, under whose discipline you live, that before you are to receive the holy sacrament, or when you are visited with any dangerous sickness, if you find any one particular sin or more that lies heavy upon you, to disburden yourself of it into the bosom of your confessor, who not only stands between God and you to pray for you, but hath

the power of the keys committed to him upon your true repentance, to absolve you in Christ's name from those sins which you have confessed unto him." (Apud Gresley, page 50, second edition, London, 1852.) Likewise the Anglican bishop, Patrick, speaks thus: "The penitent should be reminded that his confession be as minute and particular as it can, since the more particular the confession is, the more safe and sincere the repentance will surely be." (Paley's work, "The Clergyman's Companion, sec. iii.) Moreover, in the ordination of the priests in the Church of England, the power of loosing or retaining sins is stated by the following form: "Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." ("The Ordinary of Priests.") The form of the absolution to be pronounced by the ministers of the same Church is the following: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, through His great mercy forgive thee thine offences: and by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." ("The Order of the Visitation of the Sick.") Now, from the quoted form of the absolution, it is clear that the Church of England maintains that Jesus Christ is the author of the sacrament of penance; that the priests have from

Jesus Christ the power of absolving sins, and that confession is of divine right. For this reason the Puseyites retain the practice of auricular confession, and inculcate its frequent use. In the "Small Manual of the Holy Eucharist" (from the devotional writings of Taylor, Comber, Viers, Andrews, and Johnson: London and Oxford, 1856), at the appendix, page 3, says : "Confession is a great relief of the heavy burden (of sin), so that those who negligently and without motive do not make use of it, show that they do not love the peace of their conscience, and have no care for the good of their souls." Dr. Pusey, interrogated as to what must be done for the salvation of the soul, thus replied : " Since you ask me especially for counsel, I will tell you that the first thing is to prepare yourself, imploring the divine assistance, to make a general confession. If you do not know any one who can hear your confession, I am sure the Rev. . . . will receive it. Pray to God that He may enlighten you, and make you to know yourself : after this, divide your life into different epochs ; take each of them, and examine it as regards the ten commandments and the seven deadly sins, in thought, word, and deed." (Soisset, "Catholicism and Protestantism," Paris, 1846, page 320.) It will not be beside the question to add, that, amongst the Episcopalians of North America, the power of absolving from sin is now

admitted, as the Episcopalian Bishop of New York, Onderdonk, in a sermon preached at Baltimore a few years ago, and printed in the same place, defended, in the most evident manner, the power of absolving from sin, although he did not explain how such a power was exercised by them. (Kenrick, Dogm. Theol. vol. 3, Tract. de Pœnit. cap. i. sec. 5 : Philadelphia, 1840).

Let us pass to the German Protestant Church. She holds the same doctrine as the English does with regard to confession, as in the Confession of Augsburg (Art. ix.) it has been declared as follows : "Confession among us in our churches has not been abolished, as we do not intend to give the body of the Lord but to those who have been well examined, and who have received absolution." (Apud Walchium, Intr. l. i. c. 3 ; Bossuet, Hist. des Veriat. l. iii. v. 4, 6.) The same Walchius (ib. c. 4, p. 457) adds, that in the same Confession of Augsburg, "three sacraments are admitted, viz., baptism, supper, and absolution, and these are truly sacraments." And (Art. v. De Pœnit. p. 167) it is said, "absolution properly may be called the sacrament of penance." The same (p. 534) affirms, that *in his time confession was in practice* among those of his communion. In the Lutheran Denmark and Norwegian ritual, there is an article upon private confession, where there is found the *form of absolution* that the confessor has to pronounce upon the peni-

tent, after having heard the sins he had committed. (Ritual. Eccl. Norwegiæ, p. 76.) The Saxons and Bohemians also admit the necessity of confession, as is stated in the "Harmony of Confessions," pp. 231, 359. That in Protestantism, as it came from Luther, auricular confession, *as commanded by God*, was admitted, appears from Luther himself, in the passage already quoted by us in Chapter II., sec. 3, where he says "that penance is a sacrament which grants the remission of sins, and that it is the *only means* for the return of the sinner into the state of grace." Likewise (tom. iv. p. 320, Jena) he says : "We admit that the Papacy has the true keys for the remission of sins." And that confession should be retained and practised, appears from other works of Luther, in which he shows how confession should be performed. He says : "We must confess before our confessor the sins that we know, and with which our conscience upbraids us. Examine yourself, according to your condition and your state of life, upon the ten commandments of God. So, if you have been disobedient, unfaithful, idle ; in whatever you have offended your equals, by words or deeds ; whether you have stolen, or injured your neighbour," &c. (vol. viii. p. 351, Jena, written in the year 1546.) The same adds : " You must confess the sins of the heart, sins secret, and known to yourself only" (Colloquia, p. 196) ; and (p. 198), " Whoever conceals his sin from the

priest of the Lord, and thus receives absolution, must take it upon his own conscience." In fine, in the year 1546, the very year of his death, Luther wrote his Catechism, in which the *manner of going to confession* is taught. Moreover, a book in the German language, in the shape of a catechism, was published in the year 1844, by Eisleben, entitled "Luther's Catechism," in which all the answers are taken from the works of Luther. Now, in reply to the question, "Is confession necessary?" the answer is this: "It is beyond doubt that confession of sins is necessary, being commanded by God." Lastly is to be considered the form of absolution used by the Lutherans in confession, as we find in the Catechism of Luther (Cat. Min. Concord. p. 380), in the following way: "Don't you believe that my remission is that of God?" The penitent answering "Yes," then the confessor says: "And I, by command of our Lord Jesus Christ, remit your sins: in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The abolition of auricular confession having afterwards generally taken place, this event was for the Lutheran Church the cause of so many evils, that the Lutherans of Nuremberg sent an ambassador to Charles V. in order to engage him to *re-establish the practice of confession* (Soto in 4 Dist. 18, 8, 1, Art. 1); also the ministers of Strasburg expressed the *same wish*, in a memorial that they presented to their magistrate, in the year

1670. (Schifmasher, Let. 4, c. 1.) However, the practice of auricular confession in the Lutheran Church is still continued ; indeed, among the Lutherans of Saxony and Sweden, confession has been practised till the present time. Gregorie ("Historie des Confesseurs des Rois," p. 143) relates that a certain Lutheran minister, who at that time was in the exercise of his duties, being persuaded that confession was obligatory, he "*obliged his parishioners to go to confession.*" Doctor Gottlich, market superintendent of Kemniz, in the year 1800, published a small work in the German language, to prove the *necessity of auricular confession.* *L'Ami de la Religion*, on the 2nd of May, 1839, relates that on Sunday, 24th February, 1826, in the church of the Carmelites at Montaubon, the ordination of a Protestant minister took place, and that, among the other questions put to him on the occasion, was this : "Do you promise to keep the secret of the confessions which are to be made to you in the discharge of conscience ?" And he answered, "Yes ; I do promise it." Hence it appears that both schismatic and Protestant sects, although enemies of the Catholic Church, are unanimous with her in acknowledging the necessity of auricular confession, and its divine institution.

SECTION VII.

The practice of Confession approved by Infidel Philosophers, and others alien from the Catholic faith.

Among the infidel philosophers, Voltaire holding an eminent position, we begin by quoting some parts of his works, in which he renders homage to confession, and bestows upon it high eulogiums. In the "Philosophical Dictionary" (Art. : The Country Curate) he says : "Confession is an excellent thing ; it is a curb to the greater crimes. In the remotest antiquity, the people used to confess themselves in the celebration of the ancient mysteries." In the same Dictionary (Art. : Confession) he adds : "Confession is almost as ancient as civil society." In the "Essay on General History," vol. ii. p. 1, he repeats : "Confession may be regarded as the greatest curb on secret crimes. The sages of antiquity embraced the shadow of this salutary practice. The same practice was also observed in the expiatory rites of both the Egyptians and Greeks." In the "Annals of the Empire" (chap. i.) he also observes : "The enemies of the Roman Church, who have risen up against an institution so salutary (confession), have taken from men the greatest curb that can be put upon their crimes. The wise men of antiquity were themselves sensible of its importance ; and if they were unable to make it an obligation to all,

they at least established the practice for those who aspired to a sinless life. Thus has the Christian religion kept some usages of which God has permitted that human reason should see the utility, and embrace the shadow."

After Voltaire, Rousseau merits to be quoted. In the "Emile" (vol. v. book 1, note 14, in the Geneva Ed., 1782; tom. 3 and 4, p. 42, Edit. de Lecomte, 1829), after having said that the works of mercy are the daughters of evangelical charity, he continues : "What restitutions and reparations are not made through confession among the Christians ! What reconciliations are not effected, and alms bestowed, at the approaching of the time of communion !"

Thomas Raynal, a renowned disciple of Voltaire, and well known for his hatred of Christianity (in his "Historie Philosophique des Etablissements et du Commerce des Europeans dans les Deux Indes," tom. 2, p. 278, edition de Geneve, in 4) speaks thus : "The Jesuits had established in Paraguay the theocratic government, but with one peculiar advantage of the Christian religion, that is to say, the infinitely useful practice of confession. It led the guilty to the feet of the magistrate, and, instead of flying from punishment, they came to ask it on their knees. The best of all governments would be a theocracy, in which were established the tribunal of confession."

Marmontel ("Memoirs of Marmontel," tom. 1, Book 1), in speaking of confession, exclaims: "Oh ! what a salutary preservation for the morals of youth, is the practice of going every month to confession ! The shame of this humble avowal of his most hidden faults, prevents, perhaps, more faults than the most holy motives would do."

Leibnitz (in his "Theological System," traduit par Malollevant, page 269) says : "It is truly a great benefit of God to have given to his Church the power of forgiving or retaining sins, a power which she exercises through the priests, whose ministry cannot be despised without sin. And since God has established the priests as physicians of the souls, he wished that the sick should show to him their sickness, and discover their conscience. From thence it has been related, that Theodosius repentant said, with much reason, to S. Ambrosius : it belongs to you to show and prepare the remedy ; it belongs to me to take it. . . . That such institution be worthy of divine wisdom can by no means be denied."

De Saint Abrenanus ("Observations on the Doctrine of Tertullianus") praises confession thus : "The ancient practice of confession, by which we disclose our conscience to the priest, even to every slight circumstance, no one can deny being a most useful thing ; for what is more useful in the Church than the maintenance of discipline ? What

more advantageous and efficacious than private confession in instructing the people in things that are necessary ? Confession is the prop of faith, the guide to the path of salvation, the support of a tractable and upright inclination, and the teacher of virtue."

Lord Fitzwilliam ("Lettres d'Atticus, par un Anglais Protestant," page 110), after explaining the Catholic doctrine upon confession, says : "Here conscience is ruled before the only tribunal of God, not by that of this world ; here the culprit is the accuser of himself, and not the judge the Catholic Christian is scrupulously examined by another ; he waits for his sentence from heaven, and looks for a consoling absolution that is given to him, or deferred, in the name of God Almighty." And the same was so persuaded of the necessity of confession, that he arrives at the following conclusion : "It is impossible to establish virtue, justice, and morality on a solid basis, without the tribunal of penance."

SECTION VIII.

Confession practised by many of the professed Infidel Philosophers at the point of death.

The praise and recommendation of auricular confession by the infidel philosophers—the greatest

enemies of religion—goes to prove undeniably the truth we are defending. But it may be said that their having done so may be attributed to a barren or speculative admiration or vanity, or some other politic or human reason, rather than from any intimate conviction they had on the subject. Hence, to show that their testimony was sincere, and that most of these infidel philosophers were anxious to practise that which they prasied so highly, it may be desirable here to mention several of those who, at the close of life, sought to correct their former errors by having recourse to sacramental confession.

We will begin by naming the Count de Boulam-villiers, author of several works full of sarcasm against religion and Christian principles, called by Voltaire the most learned man in France, and who died the 23rd of January, 1722, in sincere repentance of his errors, in the arms of Father della Borda, having received the sacraments of confession and extreme unction. His confessor stated that, in the exercise of his ministry, he had seen few persons more religiously disposed. ("Guillois de la Confession," Lettre 9.)

Benedict Maillet, famous amongst philosophers for his geological system in opposition to the Mosaic narration, and for his adhesion to the doctrines of the Revolution, retracted his errors and irreligious hypotheses, and, by an humble confession of his sins, was reconciled to God and the Church, and

died with all the consolations of religion, in the year 1738.

La Mettrie, a celebrated Materialist, author of "Man a Machine," at the approach of death, detected the false philosophy which had carried him to such monstrous lengths, publicly retracted his errors, called for a priest, and gave undoubted proofs of his repentance. ("Melanges de Philos., par MM. Picot et de Boulogne, p. 4.) Father Hayer, speaking of La Mettrie, writes thus: "He died with the keenest regret for having fallen into the extravagancies of Materialism. I learned this fact from him who received his last sighs at Berlin." ("On the Spirituality of the Soul," Prelim. Read. page 15.)

Boulanger, author of "Antiquity Disclosed," one of the most impious and pernicious works of the last century, on his deathbed, felt the most poignant remorse, made his confession to the Abbé Lambere, Canon of St. Honoré, with feelings of the most lively repentance; and died (September 16, 1759) declaring that he had been misled, not by reason, but by vanity, and the pompous eulogies lavished on his manuscripts by the philosophic societies; and he, therefore, desired that they should be thrown into the flames; but his request was not carried out, in consequence of the said writings having been stolen by the Sophist Societies. (Feller Diz. Artic. Boulanger.)

Montesquieu, applauded to the skies by the Sophists for his work on the spirit of the Laws, and for his freedom of thought in matters of religion, as soon as he knew his end to be near, called his friend, Castel, the Jesuit father, and begged him to bring a brother priest to hear his confession. Father Castel took Father Routh with him, to whom Montesquieu made his confession with feelings of great compunction ; and, in the presence of the curate, two priests, the Count de Estilla and his wife, the physician, and the Fathers Castel and Routh, with others of his family and friends, he renounced whatever he had written against religion and morality, and promised, if he had time, to correct those parts which defamed or were adverse to sound philosophy and theology. After this he received the most holy viaticum and the extreme unction with great edification, responding most devoutly to the prayers of the Church, with his hands clasped on his breast, and died at Paris, February 10, 1755. The above-mentioned Father Routh, gives a minute account of all this in a letter written to Monsignor Gualtieri, then Papal Nuncio of France.

The impious Du Marsais had opened a school so irreligious and infamous, that he was compelled by the prohibition of public authority to close it ; and when he was appointed master and educator of three youths of one of the principal families in

France, he was not ashamed to ask their parents in what religion they desired he should bring them up ; besides having published some works in which his hatred to religion is manifest—when approaching his latter end, he became enlightened by grace, acknowledged the grievous faults he had committed, asked of the Church the means of reconciliation, made his confession, and in receiving the last consolations of religion, spoke to the priest in such a way as to show both the liveliness of his faith, and the bitterness of his repentance. D'Alembert, in his eulogy of him, speaks thus : “He fell sick in the middle of June last (1756), and being conscious of his danger, he asked for the sacraments, and received them with great tranquillity and a collected mind.” (Vol. 7 of the *Encyclopædia*.) And Voltaire, writing to D'Alembert, December 16, 1757, says : “I am indignant at the weakness of Du Marsais at his death.” (“Correspondence of M. D'Alembert,” vol. 4.)

Maupertuis, a learned astronomer and a member of the Academy of Sciences, called by Voltaire “a sublime genius, and the great mathematician, an Archimedes,” who, in his works, favoured Materialism, and was wrapped up in the impious maxims of modern philosophy—in his last illness at Bâsle, perfectly re-entered into himself, returned to the true religion, received the sacraments with the greatest fervour of spirit, and died in 1758, assisted

by two zealous Capuchins, for whom he had sent. Voltaire, writing to D'Alembert, says, "What say you of Maupertuis dying between two Capuchins?" ("Correspondence of D'Alembert," vol. 4, p. 1.)

Fontanelle, one of the founders of the philosophical school, who died at Paris, January 11th, 1757, a man of vivid and subtle wit, great eloquence, and learned in philosophy and mathematics, corrupted by the vile philosophy of the age, author of "The Story of Oracles," written in a jocose style, with a malignant mind, and almost in the spirit of the sceptics; in the last years of his life had many conferences with Father Bernard, a Capuchin; and, on the 1st day of January, 1757, finding himself ill, he asked for the holy sacraments from the curate of St. Roch, and died as a good Catholic. "He," says Lucchesini, "who jested at all things, made the wise resolve not to jest at the approach of death." ("Erculei Nuova Biblioteca,' R. P., cap. 3.)

The Marquis d'Argens, who died in 1770, well known for his absurd imagination and declared infidelity, falling sick at Dix, in Provence, began to mistrust the sentiments which, till then, he had entertained; and by means of serious reflections on the doctrines of faith, was convinced of the truths of religion. The President of d'Equilles (his brother) relates how this impious and presumptuous man humbled himself at last. He went to confes-

sion, and, dying, besought the assisting priest to suggest the sentiments and prayers with which he should occupy himself in the terrible transit from time to eternity. ("Melanges de Philosophie," vol. 4.) The repentance and confession of the Marquis d'Argens, is also attested by Frederick II., in his correspondence.

Toussaint, author of the book of "Morals," wherein he proposes a scale of natural morality, independent of all religious belief and exterior worship, when near his death, in 1772, strongly condemned the scandal he had given by his conduct and writings, and received the most holy sacraments with signs of great piety. Before receiving the holy viaticum, having summoned his friends, and called his son, a youth of fifteen years of age, to his bedside, he addressed him thus : "O my son, listen to me, and remember what I am going to say to you. I am about to appear in the presence of God, and render Him an account of my whole life. I have grievously offended Him, and have need of His mercy ; I have scandalized *you* by my irreligious conduct, and by excessively worldly maxims. Will you forgive me ? Will you do what is necessary that God may forgive me ? Will you employ yourself in following principles far different from those which I have given you ? Hear, O my son, the tardy truth that I this moment declare unto you. I call that God whom I am about to approach as

witness, in whose presence I shall soon appear, that if, in my actions, my discourses, and my writings, I have appeared unchristian, it has not been through conviction, but from human respect, through vanity, and to please certain persons. Kneel, my son ; unite your prayers to those of all who hear ; and promise to God that you will profit by my last lessons, and conjure Him to have mercy on me." (Thibault, "Mes Souvenirs de Vingt Ans.")

Bouguer, the profound geometrician, and member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, at whose death, D'Alembert could not refrain from exclaiming, "We have lost the best head of the Academy—" Bouguer had the misfortune to extinguish the light of faith in his heart ; but towards the end of his life, having heard the discourses of Father Laberthonne, a Dominican, against incredulity, he felt so convinced of it, that he renounced his errors, and made his confession. Before he began his confession, he revealed the secret motives which had held him in the paths of disbelief, in the presence of many persons, saying, with sentiments of great contrition : "I have been an infidel, because I have been corrupted. O my Father, my heart, more than my mind, wants healing." His conversion was truly sincere and steadfast, till his death, which took place in the month of August, 1758. ("Relation of the Conversion and Death of M. Bouguer," chapter 6, page 158.)

Buffon, whose geological system seemed to contradict the sacred writings, and for which he was highly applauded by the infidels, at the end of his days, disabused himself of his errors, made his confession to Father Ignatius Bougault, a Capuchin, with feelings of great compunction, placed in his hands a solemn retraction of his writings, and especially of his "Natural History," and expired like a Christian, in the arms of the same father, his confessor, April 16th, 1788.

The Count de Tressan, a friend of Voltaire, and the author of antichristian works, received the holy sacraments eight days before his death, in the year 1783, with the greatest edification. D'Alembert, having heard that the Count de Tressan had often been closeted with an ecclesiastic, called upon the invalid to inform him that there were reports spread about him, which dishonoured his character; but De Tressan having received the information with the most energetic indignation, D'Alembert withdrew in confusion, and left him to die in peace. ("Suite des Souvenirs de Felicie," par Mme. de Genlis.)

De Langle, author of several impious works, especially of "Travels in Spain," which insults religion in almost every page, falling sick, began to listen to the voice of conscience. Uneasy at the past, and alarmed for the future, he asked for a minister of the Catholic religion, and when intro-

duced, received him with joy, and exerted himself to the utmost in arranging the affairs of his soul, received the sacraments with signs of great repentance, and died with the most Christian devotion, in October, 1807. ("Melanges de Philosophie," tom. 4, page 523.) Concerning his death, Torricelli writes thus : "O wonderful conversion, wrought by the hand of our Lord ; that de Langle, who had regarded confession as an intolerable slavery, who formerly gloried in having no faith, and spoke of confession with accents of contempt, or derided it as an arbitrary institution, after becoming enlightened by grace, recognized it as a true sacrament of Christ." (vol. 9, p. 170.)

M. Robinet, author of the work entitled "De la Nature," which contains the most strange, presumptuous, and absurd opinions concerning God and His attributes, the soul, matter, &c., that have ever been written—a few months before his death, returned to the faith he had forsaken, and made the following declaration : "About to render to God an account of my thoughts, words, and actions, I publicly and sincerely retract whatever is heterodox or reprehensible, written in any of my books, either of my youth, or in the age of the Revolution ; and I humbly ask God and man to pardon me ; for I declare that I wish to live and die in the bosom of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church." Not content with this, in

receiving the last sacraments, he renewed his profession of faith, and died at Rennes, March 24th, 1820, with the most Christian-like and edifying sentiments. ("L'Ami de la Religion," vol. 24, p. 367.)

Larcher, the eminent Greek scholar, who, through intimacy with various philosophers, had become an infidel, and who, in his most celebrated works, had advanced many impious propositions, died, December 22nd, 1822, with the sentiments of a pious and fervent Christian. He had made, long before, a complete retraction, in which he said : " Being tied fast with certain professed philosophers, I had resolved to destroy the Christian religion as far as I could ; and accordingly advanced, in my notes upon Herodotus, maxims and propositions tending to the subversion of all religion ; but being now persuaded of the verity of all that the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion teaches, I sincerely detest all my hateful maxims and absurd opinions, and I would I had never advanced them ; and for it I ask pardon of God and of men, whom I have scandalized. I wish to live and die in the bosom of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church. I believe all the truths that she teaches, and I wish, with the grace of God, to conform to it in all my actions. Done at Paris this day, 5th May, 1795. Signed, Larcher." Feller's " Historical Dictionary," Art. Larcher.)

Jean Martin de Prædes reconciled himself to the Church, and made his confession to the Bishop of Breslau. In his written retraction are these memorable words, that “one life was not enough to weep for my past conduct, and to thank the Lord for the grace He had granted to me.”

Le Roy, Secretary to the impious Academy convoked by the Baron Holbach in Paris, becoming enlightened by divine grace, detested the impious maxims of the infidel philosophers, and closed his days enriched with all the succours of religion, and with a true sense of sincere compunction for his sins.

Charnois, celebrated for his enthusiasm in infidel doctrines, and for his worship of reason; when condemned to be executed in the Abbey of S. Germain, grieved at the wicked life he had led, and spoke to the priest thus: “My conversion must not be partial only. I am a Christian; receive the humble confession of my sins; and since you promise that pardon will be granted me, let me do justice at your feet; hear my confession.” This completed the joy of paradise poured into his heart, and he died a true penitent.

Raynal, author of that vile work, “The Philosophical and Political History of Commerce, and the European Establishments in the Indies,” ended by a sincere return to the Catholic religion. “This (says La Harpe, his biographer) “is an

example of the most abominable impiety and infidelity ; but ultimately he became converted, and was a warm defender of the truth of that religion which he had so calumniated and derided." The ardour with which he asked for the sacraments of reconciliation and the eucharist, the contrition which he showed at that time, the burning desire of being united with God, his tears, his words, moved the bystanders to weeping.

Febronius, very notorious for that pernicious book, entitled "The State of the Church, and the Legitimate Power of the Roman Pontiff," went to confession, and died sincerely repentant for his sins, and made a full retractation of his works.

Giannone, much renowned for his "Civil History of the Kingdom of Naples," written in a spirit most adverse to the Church, finally opened his eyes to the truth, and being penitent for his sins, made his confession to a pious and learned priest of the Oratory of Turin, and published an ample retractation of whatever he had said or done against the Holy See, or to the prejudice of the Catholic Church.

Melchior Gioia, who was highly applauded for various works written with rancour and envy against the priesthood and the Church, being attacked by serious illness, the illusions vanished, and he saw the truth in all its glory. He confessed to Father Barsega, a Barnabite, at Milan, and through

him (not having strength to do it himself), before receiving the holy viaticum, asked pardon, in the presence of many persons, for the scandal he had caused by his maxims and conduct, so opposed to the morals and dogmas of the holy religion. He, moreover, declared his desire to publish this retraction, should he survive.

Lavoisier, the illustrious chemist, reconciled himself to God by means of sacramental confession. Diorand made a general confession of his whole life to the Abbé Emery. Soulavie confessed to the Abbé Barruel, and made his retractation to him. Paul Olavide, Marmontel, Gerarde, Thomas, Palisset, Mercier, and others, died as Catholics, comforted by the sacraments of the Church. Thus we behold verified what a renowned and learned Catholic of the eighteenth century asserted, while speaking of the Sophists, that "man in life is a philosopher if you will; but in death, oh! in death, even the philosopher turns into the man." The same is confessed by Bayle, who agreed with the words of an infidel, who regretted that men of his sect did it no honour when upon their deathbed, because they died like others, having confessed and communicated.

It is known that about twenty disciples of Voltaire returned to the Church at the point of death, and were reconciled to God by the sacrament of penance.

SECTION IX.

Of other Infidel Philosophers, who, at the hour of death, desired to make their Confession, but could not obtain that benefit.

Among practical infidels, it is not rare to meet with those who, whilst practising infidelity, associate with it the hope that, at the point of death, they will have time and grace to return to God, and prepare for eternity by a good confession ; but their hope is too often proved in vain, because time, consciousness, or the grace of reconciliation, which they despised in life, frequently fails them in this extremity, and thus they bring upon themselves the threat held forth to presumptuous and procrastinating sinners, *Desiderum peccatorum peribit*. Of this number were many impious philosophers of the eighteenth century, who, making a rough calculation, persuaded themselves that they should find at death, the remedy for their misspent impious lives; but were miserably deceived. Nevertheless, their desire of confession is a new confirmation of our argument, since it proves that they recognised confession as necessary for the remission of sins, and for eternal salvation.

First amongst those unfortunate men stands Voltaire, the patriarch of infidels, and the most

atrocious scoffer of religion and morality. He who, when in health, often repeated that impious blasphemy against religion and its author, "Death to the infamous religion," and gloried in endeavouring to show the world that a single man, such as he, was enough to destroy it ; nevertheless, when he found himself dangerously ill, he became wise, changed his language, and gave signs of true conversion, calling for confessors and making retractation. It appears from the memoirs we have of him, that he fell dangerously ill three times. The first was at the house of the Governor of Maison, in 1723. He then called for the Curate of Maison, and confessed to him, as is evident from a letter from Voltaire himself, to the Baron of Bretenil, January, 1721. ("Œuvres de Voltaire," Paris, 1827, vol. iv. p. 1.) The second time was in 1769, at Ferneyner, Geneva, where his illness being very dangerous, he returned anew to Christianity, making his confession ; and by a judicial act of the 30th of March, in the same year, protesting among other truths that "the Catholic religion is the only true one, out of which there could be no salvation, and therefore I intend to live and die in it ;" and to prove that he spake sincerely, he employed himself in the conversion of the Calvinists, and assisted at mass and other Catholic functions. His third confession was when seeing himself near his end, he sent the following

note to the Abbé Gauthier, Chaplain to the Hospital of Incurables : “ M. L’Abbé, you promised that you would come to hear me. I pray you (since you are willing to take that trouble) to come as quickly as you can.—Voltaire. Paris, February 26th, 1778.” The Abbé Gauthier having gone to him, he confessed ; and there, in the presence of the same confessor, the Abbé Mignot, and the Marquis Villevielle, he made a retraction, signed with his own hand, which retraction was carried to the parish priest by the Abbé Gauthier, and then to the Archbishop of Paris, to know if it were sufficient ; but when this ecclesiastic returned with the reply, he was unable to obtain access to the chamber of the invalid, his favourites and disciples having denied admission to the minister of the sanctuary, until, at the last moment of Voltaire’s life, when he was delirious and incapable of understanding the words of the priest. Voltaire was, at this extremity, an object horrible to behold. He who, three months before, in the inebriation of pride, crowned in the theatre, and carried in triumph through Paris, exclaimed, “ Would you kill me with glory ?”—now no longer fearing to die with glory, but, on the contrary, dying in a fury and in despair. Rage, remorse, reproaches, groans, and curses succeeded each other during his long agony ! He repelled twenty or more of his faithful companions and disciples, who were sitting by

him, and said to them : “ Go ; you are the cause of the state in which you find me : what hateful glory have you procured for me ? ” His physician, Trouchin, although a Protestant, testifies that all we read of the fury of Orestes, gives not the faintest idea of that of Voltaire ; and he desired that those who had been seduced by the works of that impious man, should have been present at his terrible death. Maréchal Richelieu was so terrified, that he fled from the chamber of the dying wretch, exclaiming, with horror : “ This spectacle is too horrible ; I cannot endure to look upon it.”

D’Alembert and Diderot were the two most intimate friends of Voltaire, who watched by his side when he died, and prevented the minister of reconciliation from approaching him. Now, by the just judgment of God, it happened to them, at their death, just what they brought upon their master and companion. D’Alembert craved to confess, and to be reconciled to God, before his death ; and therefore enjoined those who attended him, that when the curate of S. Germain should come, they should introduce him immediately. This priest presented himself at the house of the sick philosopher ten times, asking admission, but was unable to enter, being opposed by Condorcet and others of that sect ; so that poor D’Alembert died without being able to confess. (“ Mémoires pour Servir à l’Histoire Eccles.” etc : Paris, 1816, vol. iii. p. 445.)

La Harpe, in his correspondence, avers that he heard from the mouth of one of these fellows that D'Alembert was a coward. Indeed, a sure proof of his so-called cowardice was his will, at the head of which he confesses that first and most august mystery of the Catholic Creed, commencing with the formula : "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Diderot, likewise, at his death, showed a truthful disposition towards his reconciliation with God. He had several conferences with M. D. Trellac, Curate of S. Suplice, and prepared himself, by making a public retraction of his errors ; but his false friends carried him into the country, where he died without having the priest to reconcile him to God.

SECTION X.

Of Celebrated Statesmen and Warriors who, at the point of death, returned to God, by means of Sacramental Confession.

The Duke of Orleans, the chief of the Revolutionists assembled against Louis XVI., on being condemned to death, 1793, entered into himself, and made a general confession to the Abbé Lothinguer, the circumstances of which are reported in a letter of this same confessor, written at

Shann, July 27th, 1797, from which we quote the following passage : "M. the Duke of Orleans, kneeling before me, implored that he might have time enough to make a general confession of his whole life. This being ended, he asked me, with feelings of contrition truly superhuman, if I believed that God would receive him into the number of His elect ; and I proved to him, from Scripture, that his sincere repentance, his confidence in God's mercy, and his resignation to death, would, without doubt, save him. He then said : 'I die innocent of that of which they accuse me. May God pardon them as I do ! Nevertheless, I have deserved death in expiation of my sins. I have helped to cause the death of an innocent man ; and, behold, I myself am condemned innocently. But He is too good not to pardon me.' I have no words (continues the same writer) to express his noble resignation, his remorse, his superhuman desires of suffering everything in this world and the next, in expiation of his sins, for which he asked a second absolution before he ascended the scaffold." ("Annales Catholiques," de M. de Bologne, vol. iv. p. 41.)

The same Abbé Lothinguer states that, besides the Duke of Orleans, there were in the same prison General Custines, Gorsas, Gardien, Viger, and other Deputies, who confessed to him.

Talleyrand had been an ardent favourer of

the civil constitution of the clergy, and had taken a prominent part in the public affairs of France, as appears from history, forgetting, at the same time, the graver duties of his dignity. The Abbé Dupanloup, a pious and learned priest (now a trustworthy bishop of the Church), had presented him with the copy of a work entitled "The Preparation for Death," by Bossuet. Talleyrand, having read the chapter entitled "The Christian prepares for his last confession before death," was persuaded to make his confession, which he did to the aforesaid Dupanloup, May 17th, 1838. It was remarked, that during the whole time of his confession, the invalid, penetrated with a deep sense of the benefit of this sacrament, held the hands of the confessor with great affection.

Napoleon I., being a captive at S. Helena, began seriously to think of his religious duties. He read works upon religion with pleasure, desired to have a Catholic priest with him, and abstained from meat on Fridays. He recognized the necessity of confession, and desired to confess, but found great difficulty in confessing to a priest so young and familiar to him as was the Abate Vignali, whom he had with him. A proof of this is contained in the words of Napoleon, to those who encouraged him to confess : "Confession, being a divine institution," said Napoleon, "it is most necessary. By unbosoming ourselves to another, we learn to

know ourselves ; it is the safeguard of conscience ; it causes us to know the depth of evil, confirms us in good, and unites us to God. But confession is an affair of confidence ; it is a delicate thing, in which we cannot command ourselves ; and then every one has the right to choose his confessor. But can I choose mine ? The Abate Vignali is a young man, and as familiar with me as yourselves. It is true that he has the faith, and is learned, but this is not enough for me ; he has not sufficient experience to be my confessor. The Abate Bonavita (who had departed)—ah ! he was a holy man. If the Bishop of Nantes had been here, I would have made my confession to him this moment. He could have done as he pleased with me.” Such was the language of Napoleon, as related by the Chevalier Beauterne, in a small work, entitled “The Religious Sentiments and Last Moments of Napoleon at S. Helena.” But great as was the difficulty felt by Napoleon in confessing to the youthful Vignali, he, nevertheless, by the grace of God, conquered it, humbled himself at the feet of the young priest, and, after many preparatory conferences, made his confession to him. The following particulars are taken by two men of equal worth, Messrs. Norvins and Marchaud : “On the 20th of April the altar was erected for Mass, and this being completed, the Emperor confessed, and received extreme unction in the course of the

same morning. The invalid," continues M. Norvins, "desired to receive the holy viaticum also the same day, but his illness would not admit of it. After receiving extreme unction, Napoleon, turning to General Montholon, said to him : 'I am happy in having fulfilled my duty. I wish you the same happiness, General, at your death. I was in need of it ; I had not practised it upon the throne, for power dazzles men ; but I never lost the faith ! The sound of bells is pleasing to me, and the sight of a priest inspires me with respect. I wished to keep it a secret ; but this is weakness. Let glory be given to God. General, give orders that an altar be erected in the adjoining chamber, for the exposition of the most holy sacrament. I fear it is not the will of God to restore me to health ; nevertheless, I desire to implore it. Cause them to say the forty-hour prayers for me. But, oh ! continued the Emperor, 'why should I give you this responsibility ? Your enemies may say that you have done all this out of your own caprice. I will give the orders myself.' " ("Mort d'un Enfant Impie, et Mort Chretienne de Napoleon," par le Chevalier de Beaurerne.) That same day Napoleon gave orders to Saint Denis that a chapel should be constructed, and, calling for the Abate Vignali, charged him to prepare this chapel according to the instructions he gave him. Hearing a sound as of laughter from a person who stood near, Napoleon angrily

exclaimed : " You are an Atheist ; I believe in God ; I am a Christian, Catholic and Roman ; I desire to fulfil all the duties which religion imposes, and to receive all the succours it administers." Then said he to Vignali : " Signor Abate, you will say Mass, and continue to do so after my death until I am buried. As soon as I am dead, you will place a crucifix upon my heart, and let my head be placed towards the altar. I desire, moreover, that the most holy sacrament be exposed, and that you recite every day the prayers of the Quarant'ore." ("Memorie de Automarchi"). These beautiful and repeated acts of religion were not pleasing to General Bertrand, and he made objections to them, telling the Emperor they were inconvenient under the existing political aspect, appearing more adapted to the character of a monk than to that of a sovereign and a veteran soldier. But Napoleon, raising himself on his elbow, replied, with an animated voice : " General, I am in my own house. There you have neither command to give nor to receive. What then do you here ? Do I interfere with what is done in your house ?" At these words, the General bowed, and went out, shrugging his shoulders, and pronouncing the word "*Capuchin !*" And Napoleon's intentions were carried out. ("Senti. Relig. di Napol. a S. Elena," c. 7.)

Napoleon was distressed at not being able to receive the holy viaticum, owing to the peculiar

nature of his malady ; "but, on the 29th of April" (as we read in his "Physician Journal"), "the pure fresh water of the fountain allayed the vomiting, and the same day the Emperor was able to receive the holy viaticum." During the last weeks of his life (as Montholon and Marchaud relate), the Emperor often desired to be left alone with the Abate Vignali ; and, with regard to these conferences, he said to General Bertrand : "It is not the Corsican I ask for (the Abate Vignali was from Corsica), it is the priest." And at another time : "I am not pious enough to communicate, but I am not yet so impious as to commit a sacrilege." Not content with having received the viaticum once, he desired to communicate again ; and on the 3rd of May received the holy viaticum for the second time, as is testified by Dr. Automarchi, in his memoirs. "On the 3rd of May, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the fever abated. All retired ; the Abate Vignati alone remained, and soon after he announced to us that he had administered the holy viaticum to the Emperor. On the 5th of May, 1821, Napoleon drew forth his hands, which had been extended at his sides, crossed them upon his breast with a marked expression, and his last words were, 'My God !'" (*Sentim. Relig. loc. cit.*) In his will he had written : "I die in the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman faith, in which I was born fifty years ago." Thus the great hero

died as a true hero, because he died as a true Christian.

During the Roman Republic of 1849, there was another example of a truly Christian death in that of the two Colonels, Manara and Melara, extolled to the skies by the Republicans, for their elevation of soul and their military valour. Of the former, mention is made in the *Monitore Romano* of the 1st of July, 1849, and also in the official bulletin of the Republican army of the same day. These passages relate that Manara fell like a hero, having his breast riddled with bullets. They added, that for greatness of courage, he had left a void difficult to fill. Now, happily, this Republican hero died as a Christian hero ; for having time to provide for the affairs of his soul, he called to him a pious and zealous minister of religion, humbly confessed to him the sins of his life, and received the most holy viaticum and extreme unction, with singular devotion and edification to the persons present, on the 6th of June, 1850, as is attested by Father Sisto d'Ognisanti, a Carmelite. (*Erculei, Nuova Biblio*, cap. 3, page 115; *Roma, 1851.*)

The other most noble example is that of Colonel Marquis Melara, whose last beautiful sentiments we read in the report made by the Rev. Camillo Guardi, of the Ministers of the Infirm, whose account, somewhat curtailed, we will give in his own words : "The Colonel Pietro Melara,

who had already received from nature a generous heart and a truly noble mind, assisted by the grace of the Omnipotent, closed his mortal career, not only with virtuous and Christian sentiments, but also with an extraordinary and most touching edification. As soon as he knew that the parish priest (who saw that his illness was dangerous) had come to visit him, and heard his first words of comfort and exhortation, he immediately implored his friendship and assistance ; and, by the sacramental confession, placed in his hands all the secrets of his heart. With true faith and the most sincere compunction, he also prayed, before receiving the most holy viaticum, that, in his name and in his stead, the priest would manifest to all who might be present at that sublime act, the sentiments of his soul, which were that he intended to participate in the sacred mysteries, not so much in consequence of the danger and fear of death in which he found himself, as from true sentiments of faith, and the desire of fulfilling the duties of a faithful Catholic, and make a public confession of his filial submission to the Catholic Church and to the visible head of the same ; intending, moreover, to ask pardon for his sins, first of God, and then of men, and especially for those sins by which he had given scandal to others : which words, being pronounced by the priest in his name, he confirmed with a faint but

audible voice, and by frequently bowing his head in token of perfect acquiescence. The sensation these words produced among the bystanders, and how the tears flowed from the eyes of all, is more easy to imagine than to describe. Not content with all this, he frequently took the hand of the priest, and, kissing it affectionately, entreated his blessing, and that he would frequently repeat to him some devout aspirations. At last he received extreme unction with extraordinary collectedness of spirit, and the most lively faith, oblivious of all worldly things, and thinking only of his coming end, and his union with God. He continued to retain the most perfect use of his senses ; and about noon, on the 30th of July, with the greatest peace and tranquillity of conscience, and edification to all present, who were deeply moved and dissolved to tears, he closed his eyes to this mortal life, to re-open them, as we confidently hope, to the light of a blessed immortality." (Erculei, see the same work, p. 118.)

The Marquis Robert d'Azeglio, of Turin, had been, in 1847, one of the most ardent advocates of the famous reform movement; and, little by little, by the influence of the works of the false divines of Protestantism, he had ended by making up for himself a kind of special creed, and he occasionally took up the pen against what he called the usurpations of the Holy See. However, a few

days before his death, when nobody as yet dared to speak to him of his coming end, he sent for an old friend and excellent Christian to come to his bedside, and entrusted to him the state of his soul, telling him, among other things, that *when standing at the gate of eternity, things appear in a very different light.* And as his friend endeavoured to console him, he answered in these very words : “ Ah ! dear friend, you know not what terrible remorse I feel overcoming me ! ” The Very Rev. Father Durando, Superior of the House of the Lazarists in Turin, had a long interview with the dying man, and, immediately after, having called to his bedside the parish priest of S. Thomas, he made his confession, and signed a full and complete retraction of his errors. After this he felt a great relief, and he died shortly after in thoroughly Christian sentiments, on the 23rd of December, 1862. (In the *Monde* of the 27th December, 1862.)

The Chevalier P. Perego was the editor of the *Verona Journal*, and, through it, he displayed a decided and furious abhorrence to the authority of the Church, by abusing fiercely the Bishops of Trevis, Chioggia, and Trent ; injuring likewise both the secular and regular clergy, mocking practices of religion, and calumniating good people, so much so, that the eleven bishops of the Venetian province, on the 4th of October, 1863, solemnly condemned

his newspaper. The said editor, on hearing of this condemnation, wrote against the Bishop of Verona a series of articles worse than a bitter Protestant would have written ; and went so far as to say : “ We protest and *may God revenge our solemn protest.*” God, indeed, revenged such an impious protest, as the next Sunday, 11th of October, the sentence of the Venetian bishops was publicly read in all the parish churches of the province, and no more than three days after, Perego was dead. On the 12th, while writing for his newspaper, he was struck by such a sudden and violent infirmity, that he felt his end was nigh ; and by the grace of God, having become suddenly wise, he sent immediately for Father Joseph of Brixen, and in three hours' time, having his mind quite calm, he wept greatly over his sins, made a truly repenting confession, commissioned the Rev. Father to ask pardon in his own name of the Bishop of Verona as well as of the other bishops injured by him ; and, in the presence of two witnesses, he retracted all errors either printed or uttered by him, and declared himself willing and ready to do everything that the bishop would impose upon him. Having received with the pardon also the pastoral benediction of his bishop, through the archpriest of S. Anastasia, he said to him : “ Many thanks ; and let God reward the bishop ; and asked again his forgiveness.

The dying man had dictated a formal retraction almost word by word, and on its being read to him he entirely approved of it, and fully confirmed it, so that he took a pen in his hand to sign it; but the pen, through his weakness, fell from his hand, and a short time after he expired, after receiving extreme unction with feelings of a heart deeply contrite and truly repentant. (Extract from the *Armonia*, October 26, 1863.)

In addition to these celebrated men, who returned to God at the point of death, we will add three more, who, at the end of their lives, asked for the minister of reconciliation, although they were unable to enjoy the benefits of his presence.

One of these is the famous *Santerre*, General of the French republican army, who had the command of the military, at the execution of Louis XVI., and stifled with his drums the voice of that unfortunate monarch, when he would have spoken to the people. *Santerre*, seeing himself at the portals of eternity, entered into himself, and thought seriously of putting his conscience in order. Accordingly, he called for the Abbé Deucully, Penitentiary Canon of the Cathedral of Meaux, but the ecclesiastic arrived too late to hear his confession, *Santerre* having already expired. ("Biographie Universelle" du Général Beauvais, Sup., page 72.)

Barras, one of the most famous of the French

Revolutionists, drawing near his end, in 1829, said to those who assisted him, that he vehemently desired to see a priest, but they answered him that there was time enough to think of that. A little after, he expressed a formal desire of conferring with the Archbishop of Paris, but they pretended they did not understand him, and so he died, with no more than the desire of confession.

Aurelio Salicetti, member of the Revolutionary Triumvirate of 1849, Deputy of Naples at Turin, shortly fell sick of a long and painful infirmity. During his illness, he asked to see a confessor, but his friends prevented him from doing so. At last, they despatched a messenger in great haste to the curate of S. Chafsius, but before he could enter the house, Salicetti was already dead. (*Observatore Romano*, February, 1862.)

CHAPTER IV

THE BENEFITS, BOTH SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL,
INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL, DERIVED FROM CON-
FESSION, SHOW ITS IMPORTANCE, AND SOLICIT ITS
PRACTICE.

The advantages derived from confession are both individual and social ; the first regard the person of the penitent, the second relate to all society.

With regard to the first, every one knows that the converted sinner, receiving this sacrament with due dispositions, obtains remission of all his sins, although they may be most grievous and enormous ; he is reinstated in the possession of both habitual and sanctifying grace. With this are given the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost ; he receives actual graces to help him to overcome temptations, and persevere in a state of justice. With the remission of the faults there is also remitted eternal punishment deserved, in consequence of mortal sins ; he may obtain, likewise, not only the remission of the eternal, but also of the temporal punishment which remains to be paid either in this life or in purgatory, if his contrition be

great and perfect. The merit of the good works which he had done in the state of grace, and which, on account of the mortal sins he had committed, had become dead and unprofitable, is restored. In fine, great peace and tranquillity of conscience, and abundant consolation of spirit, are the fruit of his reconciliation with God. By these very consoling words of the minister of Christ, *Ego te abservo*—I absolve thee—that great wall of eternal separation raised up by sin between God and the sinner, is cast down, the hard and heavy chain that kept the sinner as a slave, far from heaven, and destined for everlasting fire, is happily broken, and he is called to a new life, to the liberty of the children of God, and to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. Besides, confession tends to abate human pride, and to lead the Christian to know what he is himself. The shame felt by the penitent in confessing his sins, is very useful for him to make satisfaction for them, and to avoid future ones. Confession also induces the penitent to receive from the priest directions to amend his life, to acquire virtues, and to be careful in avoiding either too much security or despondency. Finally, by the absolution, a great consolation is felt in the heart of a true penitent. Let us mind what Luther himself says on this subject : “I esteem auricular confession, as well as virginity and chastity, as most precious and salutary. Ah!

what would be the affliction of the Christian, if there were no auricular confession; and how great, therefore, should be his gratitude to God for having handed it down to us! Auricular confession is an abundant treasury of graces, wherein God preserves for us and offers for us, perpetually, His mercy, and the remission of all our sins." (Vol. i. p. 512, Jena.) And the same (tom. i. fol. 84, Wittemberg, 1546): "I am very glad that confession exists."

In the life of Father Brydain, written by the Abbé Carron, it is related that a cavalry officer, passing through a village, entered into a church where the afore-mentioned father was giving a mission. On this occasion, having heard the missionary speaking of the utility of confession, and the manner of doing it, he decided upon making his confession, and he did so with feelings of a true repentance, as was seen also by his shedding an abundance of tears. When he had received the absolution, he felt as if a great and unbearable burden had been taken from off his head, and full of joy, being in the sacristy of the church, and in the presence of several persons, he spoke thus: "*Gentlemen, hear me; I assure you I have never tasted, in the whole of my life, a pleasure so great and so sweet as what I felt from the moment I found myself in the grace of God. I do not believe that Louis XIV., whom I have served for thirty-six years, could be more happy*

than I am : no, indeed ; this sovereign, in all the splendour of his throne, in the midst of all the pleasures which surround him, is not so content as I am since I cast off the burden, yes, the dreadful burden of my sins."

In the year 1833, a great sinner, who, among other vices, had given way for many years to sins of impurity, having met with a zealous confessor, changed altogether his life by the effect of the interior grace of God ; so much so, that from that time his heart was full of joy, and he preserved a perfect patience and resignation to the will of God, in a long and painful illness he had, and died a holy and precious death, as is related in the "*Mese Mariano pei Secolari*" of the servant of God, Vincent Pallotti. In the same book it is related of a married young lady, who for some time had proved unfaithful to her husband, that having heard a moving sermon, she went to confession, and such was the grace of her conversion, that she undertook, with the greatest courage, to lead so virtuous, chaste, and penitential a life, that she seemed to have become like S. Margaret of Cortona, both as to the spirit of her penance and the extraordinary favours granted to her by God.

It is likewise stated, that in the year 1839, a great sinner, after having recovered the grace of God in the sacrament of penance, shedding tears of tenderness, said to his confessor : "*Father, I should*

never have thought that so great and sweet could be the abundance of consolation and grace with which God rewards those who sincerely return to His bosom. O beneficent religion, how grieved I am to have known thee so late!"

Oh ! how often does the minister of reconciliation witness the sweet tears that flow from the eyes, and the sighs that come out of the converted hearts of his penitents ! How often does he hear them exclaim : "O father, I had never believed that it was so sweet to forsake sin and practise virtue !" How thankful they are to God, who has converted them ! They exclaim with S. Augustine, that they feel much happier in the privation of sinful pleasure, than they felt when they were addicted to the utmost satisfaction of their carnal senses. Indeed, the burden of sins being the cause why our soul is attached to this world, and keeps us far from the true object of our happiness, which is God, it follows that, by taking away this burden, through a proper confession, our soul, relieved from the chain which had enslaved her to the earth, follows her natural tendency, and goes with joy towards God, the only object of her happiness ; and so she finds true peace and consolation of heart. These, then, and many other spiritual advantages, are derived from a true conversion to God by sacramental confession.

But not only spiritual, but also temporal benefits

are derived from confession. A young man, named Desiderius, carried away into the current of vices, had forsaken confession and other Christian duties. He being dangerously ill, and refusing to go to confession, prayers were offered to the Blessed Mother of God for his conversion. The grace soon followed, and the obstinate Desiderius in a moment was changed : he asked for a confessor, and confession being duly made, he was no longer the man he had been before. He was no longer sad, discontented, and dying with grief and desolation, but, on the contrary, he became so full of joy and contentment, that he could not find words to express his present happiness, and felt in his heart an extraordinary power and vigour. He exclaimed: "I am the happiest man in the world." (From the Manual of the Arch. of the Sacred Heart of Mary N. D. des Victoires in Paris.) The influence of confession in curing the body, is also manifest in the following fact: The celebrated Tissot relates the cure, in Lausanne, of a young lady, whose disease had arrived to a point very alarming. She, having been acquainted with the danger in which she was, became so frightened at the thought of having soon to die, that she abandoned herself to violent agitation, and ultimately to despair. The doctor judged that such addition of moral evil would accelerate her death, and told the persons in attendance that it would be advisable to give her

the consolation of religion. The Catholic priest having called, she considered him as the only good which remained for her ; and at the words of consolation which came out of his mouth, she became calm, she occupies herself with God, she thought of the eternal interests of her soul, received the holy sacrament with edifying piety, and the following day, on the doctor's return, he found her in such a state of calm and peace, that the change forcibly struck him ; the fever had diminished, the symptoms of illness had changed for the better, and in a few days the sickness had disappeared. Tissot, although a Protestant, was fond of relating this event, and used to exclaim with admiration : “*How great is the power of confession among the Catholics !*”

Doctor Ami Badel, of Geneva, a Protestant physician, had a book printed, called “*Réflexions Médico Théologiques sur la Confession,*” and in this he proves that confession is a means of cure for diseases, on the consideration of the great influence which the moral has upon the physical state of man. He recommends its practice, and says that it is *advantageous to all society.* This principle, although coming from a Protestant doctor, should be attentively listened to and practised by all Catholic doctors, who, in dangerous illnesses, are often deterred from advising their patients to receive the sacraments of the Church, on the ground that the

sick person may become worse by so doing, and the consequence is, that by such false pity many souls go to hell.

Now, let us pass to see the advantages of confession to society in general. These are so many, and of such a description, that they have been the object of the admiration and praise, not only of Catholic, but also of Protestant writers, as well as of the bitterest enemies of religion. We have already quoted a good number of these testimonies, in the vii., viii., ix., and x. of the preceding chapters, but some witnesses of a particular character shall here be added. First, let us hear Leibnitz ("*Systema Theologicum*," traduit par M. Mallevant, p. 269), who, speaking of confession, says : "There is nothing better and more worthy of the Christian religion ; the very Chinese and Japanese are struck with admiration at its results. Indeed, the necessity of going to confession averts a great many from sin, and causes great consolation to those who have fallen into it. So I look upon a pious, grave, and prudent confessor as a great instrument in the hands of God for the salvation of souls, because his advice serves to direct our affections, to make us aware of our defects, to avoid the occasions of sin, to make restitution of stolen things, to repair scandals, to dissipate doubts, to raise up the dejected spirit ; in fine, to carry off or lessen all the disorders of the soul. If the finding of a faithful

friend be one of the most excellent things to be had in this world, how much more happiness is there in finding one who is obliged, by the inviolable religion of a divine sacrament, to guard faith and succour souls!"

"Confession," says Mr. Rosset, author of "Theophilus," "prevents a great many crimes, adulteries, divorces, enmities, and so on." To these may be added the testimony of the Protestant minister, Claus Hermes, who asserts he had nothing to ask with more eagerness from the King of Prussia, than to again establish confession, as this is the most efficacious means to maintain the people in the observance of their duties. ("Evangelical Magazine" of Berlin, 1829, No. 81.) And this is the same that the Protestant ministers of Nuremberg, as well as those of Strasbourg, did, asking the repeal of the abolition of confession, on the ground that after it the people had become very much worse. Veisaheraupt, founder of the modern Illuminism in Bavaria, acknowledging the great utility of confession, studied the manner to supply this want, by engaging his followers to declare their whole interior, and make an exact and ingenuous report of their life. ("Tassoni la Religione Dimost," tom. iii. cap. 36.) A farther proof of the same truth is to be found in the good that confession produced in the republic of Paraguay. Since confession (as has been related by the Protestant Raynal, already

mentioned) brought the guilty to the feet of the magistrate, where, instead of concealing or diminishing his crime, the force of his repentance made it more grievous, and instead of trying to elude the penalty, he came to ask it on his knees, and the more the punishment was severe, the greater was the calm of his conscience. The social benefits of confession are also attested by Cerutti, a great friend of Mirabeau. They are : To inspire horror or repentance of crime, to put an end to wickedness, to support innocence, to prevent and repair thefts and robberies, to tighten the knots of mutual charity, to foment the love of peace, of concord, of subordination, of justice, in a word, of all virtues ; to eradicate from the heart the habits of disorders, disunions, rebellions, and all vices ; and ends by saying, that the office of confessor is one most fit to maintain good morals, and consequently one most suitable for the *public interest*. ("Nonnote Dictionnaire Antiphilosophe," Art. Confes.) So one of the most celebrated ancient revolutionists, as Cerutti was, shows to the modern revolutionists how wrong they are in persecuting confession, and the ministers of this sacrament, since by so doing they conspire to the great damage both of religion and the public interest, which they falsely boast to promote. Also the restitution of stolen things, and the reparation of honour and reputation taken away from our neighbour, are, indeed, great

advantages to society, coming from confession, as was also observed by Rousseau ("Emile," tom. iii. lib. 4): "*What restitution, what reparations, does not confession effect among Catholics?*" A Catholic Swiss, travelling between Berne and Fribourg, found a large sum of money, and, by the advice of his confessor, having given this money to the magistrate of Berne, this noble action so pleased the aforesaid magistrate, that he recommended by public announcement the use of confession. ("Des Causes du Bonheur Public," p. 250, edit. 1768.) A Catholic priest, during Easter time, sent to a Protestant minister a large amount of money belonging to him, but of which he was not aware. This gentleman, who used till that moment to ridicule the sacraments of the Catholic Church, changed at once this conduct, in consequence of such a proof of the effect of confession ; and then he could not help oftentimes exclaiming : "*I must say that confession is a very beautiful thing!*" In the *Journal des Debats* of April 9, 1839, it was related, that in the prison of Beaulieu the Catholic chaplain, in five years, caused restitutions to be made to the amount of twenty thousand francs ; so that it was made clear that confession in the prisons does what justice cannot do among tribunals. In the newspaper *L'Armonia*, on the 24th February, 1864, the following notice is there found : "A sum of £277 had been sent to the French government through

Monsignor Lefabore, as a restitution of an equal sum stolen from the government. Monsignor Lefabore is the Vicar-Apostolic in Concincina, and even from those distant countries the zeal of the Catholic clergy persuades in the confession to make restitution of the stolen money." In the same gazette, on the 3rd April, 1864, another like restitution made to the Turin government is found as follows: "The Minister of the Finances has received from an anonymous correspondent, through the post, the sum of £140, as a restitution to the Turin government." In the same, 8th June, 1864, it mentioned another restitution made to the same minister of £200. *The Univers*, on the 2nd July, 1864, number 186, relates the following: "A widow lady named Pilmaune recently died at Charlerof, Belgium, and the family of the deceased were for three days assembled at her residence for the purpose of hearing the will read. The *Juge de Paix* and a notary had arrived, when suddenly the Canon Raoul, curé of the town, who had not been invited, entered the room. ' You are, no doubt, surprised to see me here, gentlemen,' he said. ' We are,' replied several voices. ' Well, reassure yourselves; I have not come to put forward any claim, but simply to make restitution.' He then handed to the *Juge de Paix* a small packet carefully tied up, which, on being opened, was found to contain gold and bank notes to the amount of 210,000 francs.

'This has been entrusted to me,' said the curé, 'in consequence of an avowal made at the confessional. I do not know the amount, nor do I wish for a receipt.' The respected ecclesiastic saluted the company, and withdrew."

CHAPTER V.

OBJECTIONS TO CONFESSION ANSWERED.

FIRST OBJECTION.

The Priest who hears Sacramental Confessions is apt to disclose what has been confided to him.

To discredit confession, and dissuade the faithful from frequenting it, many calumnies are spread, and among them that the confessor easily reveals the sins avowed to him. To confute such a calumny, it must be observed that the confessor is bound to keep the most profound secret in all that is a matter of accusation in confession, or, as theologians say, in all that has been sacramentally entrusted to him. The mouth of a confessor is shut by three seals, that is, the natural, the divine, and the ecclesiastical seal. First, *the natural seal* prevents him from disclosing anything, because sins being of their nature secret, as they were manifested to him under secrecy, it follows that by the law of nature, which requires the inviolability of a secret, he is obliged to observe strict silence. To the natural seal is to be added *the divine seal*, as Jesus

Christ, by instituting the sacrament of penance, and making a precept of confession, understood and wished that this sacrament (as tradition testifies) should be adapted to human condition and to the true advantage of the faithful ; but such could not have been, unless by divine institution he had imposed upon the minister of reconciliation the law of the most strict silence. The third is *the ecclesiastical seal*, commanded by the Church to confessors under the most severe penalties, as may be seen by perusing the ecclesiastical canons, and in particular the canon *Omnis utriusque de Pœnit. et Rem.*, in which is enacted the deposition from the sacerdotal office, and of a perpetual detention in a convent of strict observance, against any one who should dare to violate the sacramental seal of confession. Pope Innocent III. (in Concil. Gen. Later. in the same canon *Omnis*) says : "The priest must be mindful that he cannot at all, by word, sign, or any other manner whatsoever, manifest in any way the sinner." And as there were some who maintained that a confessor could make use of the knowledge acquired in confession, in the case that it could be done without any direct or indirect revelation of the sin, and without any grievance of the penitent, Pope Innocent XI. condemned such an opinion ; so that a confessor is forbidden to make use, for any purpose, of what he heard in confession, although it could be done without any direct or indirect violation of

the sin, and without any grievance to the sinner. And that such a crime had never occurred, has been also testified by a Protestant writer, Marmontel, who says : "The secret of confession is impenetrable but from one side. If the penitent is aware that he who hears him abuses his ministry, he has the right of denouncing him. But how is it that there has never been a single instance of an informer of such a kind of seduction ?" ("Opinion de Marmontel sur le libre Exercice des Cultes," Mem. tom. ii.) There is no menace nor pain whatever, even of death, which can induce the confessor to betray the secrets of the confessional ; he despises every threat, and meets any penalty, even that of death, rather than disclose any sin whatever. A clear proof of this is to be found in S. John Nepomucen, confessor of the Empress Johanna, wife of Venceslaus, Emperor and King of Bohemia. This sovereign had conceived a foolish desire to know the secrets of her conscience, and he believed that her confessor would reveal them to him. For this end he made use of flatteries and promises; but seeing that he could not obtain anything, he began to threaten and to strike him ; and this also proving useless, he at last intimated to him, that unless he acquiesced in his wishes, he should be put to death. However, the saint simply said : "Sire, you may cause me to die, but you cannot make me speak." Then the barbarous

Emperor ordered his servants to seize the holy confessor, and cast him into the river Maldave, which runs through the midst of Prague ; and so, John, by keeping inviolate the sacramental seal, became a martyr. His death took place in the year 1383, and in the year 1719, the case in which his body was kept being opened, it was found that all the rest of his body having been reduced to ashes, his tongue, which had kept the secret, had remained sound and ruddy. But the confessor could perhaps speak if the public good required it? No ; no good, although of a superior order and of public utility ; although upon it might depend the subversion of all the kingdom, is the confessor allowed to do, by betraying the confession made to him. If the confessor should be summoned to give evidence before a judge in relation to a sin heard in confession, could he do it? No ; because there is no human authority which can compel the manifestation of the sacramental secret. When a priest sits down in the confessional, he executes his office, not as a private person, not as a simple man, nor yet as a citizen, bound by the laws of his country ; but he is there as representing, a lieutenant of God ; he stands as though he were Jesus Christ Himself. Hence it follows that the penitent manifests his faults to the confessor, not as to a private person, not as to a man obnoxious in such a function to human power, but as to the representative of God,

and as to Jesus Christ Himself; so much so, that the act of confessing becomes an act, not purely human and dependant upon earthly power, but a superhuman and a celestial one, upon which no power of the earth has any control or command, and upon which no human being, although of the highest rank and condition, has any right of trying to inquire into, and, as confessor, that of betraying. Hence, if a judge, or a sovereign, or a bishop, or even a pope, should interrogate a confessor, in order to know some matter appertaining to confession, to such a sacrilegious demand the confessor could not only refuse to communicate the desired answer, but he could freely say that he knew nothing about the matter, and he could confirm it upon oath ; nor by saying so would he tell a lie, nor be considered a perjurer, as it is quite true that he, as a simple man and a citizen, subject to the laws of his country, knows nothing ; what he knows he knows as a confessor and a representative of God, and as such he knows it by an incommunicable science, of which no human authority has a right to be informed. Everything heard in confession, and done in it, is quite out of human affairs. "A man," says S. Thomas, "cannot be summoned to give evidence but as a man, and consequently he can declare, without offending his conscience, that he is ignorant of a thing when he knows it only as God. Now (he concludes), whatever is

known by confession, it is the same as to have never known it, having the knowledge of it, not as man, but as God." (Sum., par. 2.) On this particular it is proper to relate what took place in Rome in the year 1861. A confessor having arrived in Rome from abroad, to inform the Holy Father about the circumstances of the death of a personage of distinction, the Holy Father, before that confessor had began to speak, said to him : " We declare to you that the seal of confession is so inviolable, that you are bound to keep it before any authority, although the highest one, although it should be our own." (Civilta. Catt., ser. ix. vol. xi. p. 603.)

This is so reasonable, that the very lay courts have acknowledged this inviolability of the sacramental seal, as is to be seen in the decree of the Court of Cassation in France, in the proceedings against the confessor Valeine, who refused to reveal the secret of confession. In this decree it has been declared, that *the magistrates ought to respect, and make others respect, the secret of confession, so much so, that a priest should not be compelled to bear witness, nor to be asked upon the revelation made him in confession.* The same inviolability of the secret has been also admitted by the Protestant courts in the United States of America. The curate Kohlman was summoned in New York, in order to manifest the author of a robbery which he must have heard

of in confession ; but the curate refusing to say anything about it, the jury, on the 14th day of June, 1813, declared that, *if the conscience of a priest, depository of the confidence of his parishioners, should be constrained, it would be to deprive the Catholics of their sacrament* ; and upon this consideration, the unanimous decision of the Protestant jury was, that the curate *was not obliged* to reveal the name of the author of the robbery in question. (Chron. Relig. tom. i. p. 7.) However, it is a pity to see that England has not yet acknowledged the propriety of such a necessary principle of good legislation, and that even to the present day wants to induce the confessor to manifest the authors of some crime known in confession, or entrusted to him on account of his clerical position, as occurred in December, 1862. Stolen money having been restored to the owner, the priest who was the medium of the good work was summoned and forced into the dilemma of betraying his penitent or going to prison himself as a contumacious witness. Of course the Rev. Mr. Maclaughlin, a Scottish priest, felt himself bound under the obligation of the sacerdotal seal not to betray the trust confided to him as a priest, by revealing the name of the transgressor, and chose without hesitation the latter alternative, and was committed to prison. (*Weekly Register*, Jan. 3, 1863.)

But as some may think that at least by some

natural infirmity, or by an aberration of mind, or by insanity, or by drunkenness, or apostacy, a confessor could have broken, or could break, the sacramental seal, we may observe that Providence watches so much over the custody of the sacramental seal, that it has never allowed that it should be broken. There have been several instances of confessors who have been insane, or have met with such infirmities as cause the patient to say what they have done, or seen, or heard before, but nevertheless, there has not been a single instance of a confessor having, during such aberration of mind, revealed what they had heard in confession. By their continued speaking, passing from one object to another, they have arrived at the confessional, but *here they stopped*, and could not find words to say what they heard there. There have been insane confessors, who have been purposely asked by some indiscreet persons upon matters of confession ; they, although sensible and calm the moment before, flew into a rage, and reproached the persons for their imprudence. Such was the case with the Abbé Hulbert, brought insane into the hospital of Maux, who, having been visited by some of his acquaintances and asked the question : “*You have been a confessor; tell us something!*” as soon as he heard these words became furious, and crying out, said to them : “*You are impious and infamous men, to ask me about matters of con-*

*fession. Go away; such things can never be revealed!**

And so saying, he violently sent them away from his room. (A. Guillois la Confession, lett. 13.) The most wonderful thing is to observe that God has never permitted the malice of a prevaricating priest to go so far as to betray the secrets of confession. All know the scandals that took place in France at the end of the last century; there were suspended priests trampling upon the most solemn oaths, violating the law of celibacy and attempting sacrilegious unions, abjuring both the priesthood and the Catholic faith, and nevertheless, in the midst of so many vices and disorders, there was not found one who attempted to violate the sacramental seal; as has been observed by M. d'Exanvilly: "God permitted every other scandal, but he prevented this, the most dangerous of all." (Le Bon Curé.) L'Abbé Benaudiniere, curate of Evron, had become a debauchee, an impious, blasphemous man, in a word, a mass of vices; yet when somebody wanted to converse with him upon matters of confession, he became silent. Once, being intoxicated, his companions proposed to him several artful questions upon things heard whilst he was a confessor; but he went away from the place, crying and saying: *Such things cannot be spoken of.*" (A. Guillois, loc. cit.) Another miserable priest of the diocese of Mans had been sacrilegiously married, and being

of a sweet and peaceable temper, was never seen to be angry, except once, when his pretended wife had the impudence to ask him about confession : on that occasion he could not help being angry with her. (*Idem. loc. cit.*) The following fact is more striking still : an apostate priest, finding himself in the midst of impious companions at the time of the French Revolution, was assailed by them, and every effort was made to compel him to reveal the secrets of confession, he having been made drunk for that purpose. At such a proposal he did not answer, but only roared. The party, however, insisting in their demand, and this not being complied with, they rushed upon him brutally, and wanted to compel him by force to do so. Then the apostate, drunken priest took a poignard, put it to his breast, and exclaimed, "You may drive this poinard into my heart, but you shall never get the secrets you ask." ("Dictionnaire des Object Popul," Art. *Confession*, p. 449, tom. xxxiii., Migne, Paris, 1860.) The same inviolability of the sacramental seal is acknowledged amongst such renegade priests or friars, living in Protestant countries, who, although for the sake of eating Protestant bread, often declaim against confession, yet they were never heard to have revealed a single sin of any particular person heard in confession. In conclusion, from what we have said, it appears that neither,

through promises, nor intimidation, nor madness, nor drunkenness, nor apostacy, nor any motive whatever, has it happened that a confessor has ever revealed a single sin. Hence the experience of the past, and the same divine Providence that watches over the future, are a full guarantee for the penitent that his sins, although the most shameful and grievous, will never be disclosed.

OBJECTION II.

"The Confessor scolds me."

This is another objection, but one less reasonable than the preceding one. To answer it, we must observe that the confessor is the minister, the vicar, the delegate of Jesus Christ, and then he uses that benignity and compassion which were practised by Jesus Christ Himself when He was on this earth. As our Divine Model never upbraided any sinner who went to Him to ask pardon, so the confessor does not upbraid the repenting sinner who goes to him with due dispositions, but he embraces him with the benignity with which Jesus Christ received the Matthews, the Zaccheuses, the Magdalens, the adultresses, and all kind of sinners. Far from being angry with the grievousness and malice of the sins which he hears, he has reason to console himself, not on account of the offence to

God, which afflicts him, but because, through confession, he takes away a soul from the power of the devil, and brings it to Jesus Christ, so that the confessor is the more thankful to God the more numerous and grievous are the faults of which the penitent discharges his conscience ; and on this account, far from scolding the penitent, the confessor treats him kindly. He is the shepherd running after the lost sheep, and happy in finding it, though full of wounds and in a mortal state. But supposing that the confessor should scold the penitent, does not the sinner deserve to be reprimanded ? By scolding him, the confessor means to make him sensible of, and to consider the malice and the gravity of his sins, and to fill him with salutary fear, in order that he may not return to commit them. Hence the sinner, instead of being afraid of the confessor's reprimands, should wish to be rigorously reproved, considering him as his spiritual father, and reflecting at the same time that the reproaches and scoldings of a father have only for their object the amendment of his son, whom he loves, and would wish to see virtuous. In fine, is it not better to hear the reprimands of a confessor than those penetrating rebukes and condemnation of Jesus Christ as an indignant Judge at the day of judgment ?

OBJECTION III.

“By confessing certain sins I shall lose the good opinion of my Confessor.”

Such a difficulty is the effect of pride, which predominates in the heart of a penitent, who does not like to appear a sinner in the eyes of his confessor ; whereas, if he were humble, not only would he reveal without hesitation his miseries, but he would also rejoice to be considered by his confessor such as he is, a great sinner. The confessor, although invested with a superhuman and divine power, is still a man subject to the same miseries as the penitent—“CircumdatuS est infirmitate” (Heb. v. i.)—and capable of committing sins, in number and grievousness even greater ; and, therefore, S. Augustine (L. de Vera et Falsa, Pœnit. c. 10) says to the sinner : “Do not be ashamed to confess your sins to a sinner.” The confessor does not lose the good opinion of him ; so that if a penitent confesses sincerely to him all his sins, even the most grievous ones, and also those left out through shame in former confessions, for years, the minister of God, far from losing the good opinion of his penitent, would form a better opinion of him ; for he would say : “It is true that this soul has committed as many sacrileges as were the confessions

and the communions made in a state of mortal sin ; it is true that it has been for a long time a slave of the devil, destined to eternal fire ; it is true that it has ungratefully offended God in so many ways, and with so many abominable sins ; but it is equally true that now, by sincerely confessing all these sins which he had till now concealed, it shows that he is a prudent and judicious person, who does not wish to lose, but rather to save his soul. Hence the confessor, instead of conceiving a bad opinion of the penitent, conceives a good one, and says : " Now I see that this person, having overcome so well all the difficulties he has had to make a good and sincere confession, he desires really his salvation. God be blessed ! I am very glad of it ! "

OBJECTION IV.

"I am ashamed to confess certain sins."

How many souls are now a prey to eternal fire on account of the sacrileges they committed in having concealed their sins in confession through shame ! It is, indeed, shameful to do evil, but it is not shameful to confess the evil done ; nay, such confession deserves to be praised. It is related in history, that a disciple of Socrates, coming out of a house of bad fame, seeing his master passing, went

back, in order not to be seen by him. But Socrates, who had already seen him, having arrived at the house, called his disciple by name, and said : "Come away from here, as you should be ashamed to enter this house, and not to go out of it !" S. Augustine was not ashamed to confess publicly his shameful sins ; nay, he was not content with showing himself guilty in the face of his contemporaries, but he wished that his faults should be known to posterity, by writing purposely a book called his "Confessions." His generous confession was not a dis-honour, but a glory to him. If he and many other saints, who had been great sinners, had not overcome their shame, they now, instead of being saints in heaven, would be reprobates in hell. There is no intermediate way : either by confessing our sins, overcoming all shame, go to heaven, or by concealing our sins, fall into hell. Had Jesus Christ commanded a public confession, in order to obtain the pardon of our sins, we should have been obliged to comply with His command, in order to avoid hell ; but since he does not wish for so much, but only to confess before a single person, himself miserable like the penitent, shall it be considered too difficult to do so ? Had a man fallen into the sea and been saved by a sailor, who caught hold of him by the hair, he would be very thankful to his liberator, and although he had suffered some pain through being rescued by the hair, yet is he happy, because

it has proved the means of his escaping death. The sinner, likewise, if he wishes to avoid falling into hell, must willingly bear the little pain and difficulty he resents in confessing his shameful sins, on the consideration that through it he shall be saved. Shame is unfortunately the net by which the devil drags into hell a great many souls. It is related by Cassianus that one of the fathers of the Hermitage once saw the devil going about the confessionals, and having asked him what he was doing, the devil answered : "I am making restitution. I give back to the penitents what I took from them." And being asked what he meant, he answered : "To induce them to sin I took away their sense of shame ; but now that they have to confess, I return them the feeling of shame, to induce them to conceal their sins in confession."

(In *Vita Patr. Cassian.* c. ii. 2 lib. 11.)

Consider on this particular what Luther says in the vol. i. of his works (p. 312, A. Jena) : "What is this shame we feel in declaring our sins to a man, compared to the shame that will overwhelm us when death, and perhaps an immediate death, will force us to confess them in the presence of God, in the presence of the angels, and of the very devils themselves ? And all this we can avoid by humbling ourselves in the presence of a single man ! Moreover, I do not conceive that that man can feel a lively faith who will not even condescend to

so slight a humiliation, and thus bear a small share of the holy cross."

It is a salutary reflection to bear in mind when the penitent is going to confession, that if he conceal his sins to a single man, these very sins shall be made known, not only in the particular judgment at the point of death, but also to all mankind on the day of the last judgment. What greater shame than this! What a cruel remorse all those who are condemned for having concealed their sins in confession are now experiencing in hell? Were they allowed to come back for a short time in this world, they would not shrink from manifesting their sins, even the most shameful ones, in the public squares, and in the presence of thousands of persons, if by this means they could be rescued from the everlasting torments of hell! But, as for them, there is neither hope nor remedy. You, however, who read these pages, have yet time to remedy any bad confession. Humble yourselves before God, as did the prodigal son, and confessing sincerely all your sins to His minister, you will find freedom and deliverance from eternal damnation.

OBJECTION V.

"The Confessor is too rigorous and exacting."

We frequently hear it said that the confessor requires too much of his penitents, that he does not calculate the circumstances of the person and of the family, that he does not take into account the times in which we live, that it is necessary he should be present at people's houses, and see with his own eyes how things are going on there, that he is too particular and too scrupulous to wish and to desire that every one should think as he does, and so on. Owing to such pretences they rarely go to confession, and when they are obliged to fulfil their Easter duties, they are not satisfied with their confessor, and have sometimes to contend with him. But if a Christian were to act in this way, he should be considered as having but the name of a Christian, thus showing that he wishes to act by his own caprice, and not according to the laws of God and His Church ; and so they are very little disposed to obtain the pardon of their sins in the sacrament of penance. For a good Christian, who wishes to be directed in the way of heaven and save his soul, does not complain of the confessor, but he abandons himself entirely

into the hands of his spiritual father, and depends upon what he says, and humbly puts himself under his direction. Indeed, who would say that such a doctor is too severe when he requires his prescriptions to be strictly executed? He knows why he is acting so, what are the remedies fitted for his patients, what is necessary to save them from death; and patients wishing to recover make no complaint about what the doctor does, but execute minutely all his directions. In this same manner has the penitent to act towards his confessor, by doing exactly what has been ordered by his spiritual doctor, who knows what is required for the recovery of his spiritual disease. Truly it would be a great temerity in a patient, were he to tell the doctor what to prescribe, and choose for himself the medicine to be taken, and refuse those medicines which he would dislike to take. Of the same rashness would that penitent be guilty, who should refuse to depend upon his confessor for the things necessary for his soul, and would act according to his own judgment, in spite of the directions of his spiritual doctor. The sick man who declines following the prescriptions of his doctor, is likely to die; the penitent, likewise, who refuses to follow the advice and discretion of his confessor, puts himself in danger of losing his soul. It is, therefore,. a particular obligation of the penitent, to obey his confessor with humility, being persuaded

that the confessor is not too exacting, but does only what his office requires of him, regard being had to the good and wants of the penitent, in order to bring him back from the state of perdition. At the hour of death, when things are seen with a different eye than they are in life in the enjoyment of health, it will be discerned that the confessor was not too rigorous, and that if he had taken a different course the eternal salvation of the penitent would have been endangered. However, if the penitent has good reason for believing that his confessor is not a suitable one for him, he should pray to God to have the grace to know His will, and then ask the advice of another prudent spiritual father; and should the latter's judgment be for changing the confessor, he may do it.

OBJECTION VI.

"It is too hard and humbling to kneel before a man."

The confessor in the tribunal of penance is a man, but a man invested with authority, and raised above his fellows. He is the lieutenant, the delegate, the representative of Jesus Christ. This means that it is just, dutiful, honourable, sweet, and pleasant to kneel down before him, and to revere him as he deserves for his high dignity and sublime representation. If, to avoid hell, it should

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be required to humble oneself and kneel down before the vilest of men, it would be neither too debasing nor too heavy a task to do so, since eternal salvation is at stake ; how then can it be said that it is too arduous and humbling to kneel down before a person so exalted and so august as is the confessor ? Will the penitent, who had no difficulty in consenting to sin, to prostitute himself to the devil, and by the very fact of sinning adore Him as his God, find difficulty in kneeling down before him who takes away his sin, and frees him from the slavery of the devil, and enables him to enjoy again the liberty of the children of God ? There is no dispensation from this obligation. The very supreme head of the Church has no dispensation ; so that he is obliged, like everyone else, to kneel before the priest and confess his sins, in order to receive absolution for the same. The same head of the Church has no power to give dispensation to others from confession, as has been observed by S. Thomas (Suppl. 3, p. 9, 6 art. 6), in these words : " As the Pope cannot dispense any person from baptism, so that he can be saved without it, so neither can he dispense any sinner from confession."

OBJECTION VII.

"I make my Confession before God, and this is enough."

With regard to such a false principle of modern sectarians, what has been stated in the chapter ii., sec. ii. and iii., is to be remembered, that is, that according to the present order of Providence in the evangelical law, the Christian sinner cannot find any other means of pardon, except that of sacramental confession when it is possible to do it. To hold a contrary doctrine would be to fall into an error already condemned by the Church in the vi. can. of the xiv. sess. of the Council of Trent, where excommunication is pronounced upon any one who should maintain one of the following propositions: That *the institution of confession is not of divine right; that confession by divine ordination is not necessary to salvation; that the mode that the Church from the beginning has always retained and still retains for the sinner to confess secretly his own faults to the priest alone, is contrary to the institution and command of Jesus Christ; that such an institution is a human institution.* And to induce the faithful to comply at least once a year with such an obligation, the same Council pronounces anathema against those who would dare to maintain that *the faithful are not obliged to go to confession, at least once a year, according to the canon of the Council*

of Lateran. God wishes to grant pardon, but He wishes that His ministers should pronounce the sentence, in order that this, having been lawfully pronounced, He should confirm it. "*The servant*," says S. John Chrysostom ("Lib. de Sacerd."), "*pronounces before the master; the heavens expect the judgment of the earth to give its own: there is confirmed what has been here decided.*" Origen (Homil. x. in N. T. ii. p. 302) likewise says: "If we disclose our sins, not only to God, but to those who may apply a remedy to our wounds and iniquities, our sins will be effaced by Him who said: 'I have blotted out thy iniquities as a cloud, and thy sins as a mist.'"—Isaias. And S. Augustine (Homil. 49, de 50) says: "Nobody may say 'I do secret penance before God,' because from this it would follow that without reason has been said, 'whose sins you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven,' and likewise without reason the keys of heaven have been given to the Church of God; by so saying, we frustrate the Gospel of God, frustrate the words of Christ." S. Pacianus refuting the Novatians, says: "But God alone, you Novatians will say, can grant the pardon of sins. Even so, but what He does by His ministers is done by His own power"—*quod per sacerdotes suos facit ipsius potestas est.* (Ep. i. ad Sympron.) There is no person, however privileged, as has been already observed, that can be dispensed from the duty of going to

confession to the minister of God ; from the humblest of subjects to the greatest of monarchs ; but this happy necessity makes all sinners equal before God, and obliges all without distinction to wash themselves in the same purificatory, as if they wish to participate of the so many spiritual goods that are derived from the sacrament of confession.

OBJECTION VIII.

“Confession is not of Divine Right, it having been introduced in the thirteenth century.”

This is one of the most ridiculous objections often reproduced by Protestants as a very strong argument against the necessity of confession. Now, to show the absurdity of it, it will be sufficient to remember, that from all the historical monuments of the first twelve hundred years of the Church, it is evident that always and everywhere, and among all classes of persons, confession was in practice, as has been fully demonstrated in the second chapter of this work. If this be well understood, how can they say that confession was introduced in the thirteenth century ? To find something in their favour, they mention that the discipline of confession emanated from the fourth Council of Lateran. But that Council did not introduce confession ; but supposing its existence, as was

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the case, ordained only that the faithful should go to confession to their pastor at least once a year. This is so true, that Calvin himself declares that confession is of a very ancient use, and Luther says confession is commanded by Jesus Christ. Here are the words of the Council of Trent upon this subject : “Through the Council of Lateran the Church did not establish that Christians should go to confession, as it was known that confession was of divine order and institution ; but that the precept of confession should be fulfilled by all at least once a year.” (Sess. xiv., chap. v.)

OBJECTION IX.

“Confession, though practised in the old Church, was abrogated by Nectarius, Archbishop of Constantinople, in 390.”

Here is a new proof of the inconsistency of Protestants, who at their pleasure say and retract what they have said. In the preceding objection they maintained that confession began to be used in the thirteenth century ; in this, on the contrary, they suppose it had been in use in the first three centuries of the Church, but that at the time of Nectarius it ceased to be so. We need not observe that by history the calumny is confuted, as it appears that confession was always in vigour

in the Catholic Church, without interruption. But, to answer this particular objection, we say that the Constantinopolitan Archbishop, Nectarius, did not abrogate secret confession, this not being in his power, neither did he put any restriction upon it, but he only abolished the *office of penitentiarius*, on account of some inconveniences which had arisen from the public confession. According to the discipline of the Church, besides the secret, there was also in use the public confession for public sins, and the penitentiarius had the office of hearing both secret and public confession. However, according to the testimony of Socrates and Soxomenon, some inconveniences having taken place by the fault of the penitentiarius, Nectarius thought it his duty to remedy these inconveniences by suppressing the office of penitentiarius, giving permission to every one to go to confession to any priest they pleased, without going to the penitentiarius for some particular sins, as they were obliged to do before. Now from this fact, it is clear, nothing can be inferred against the use of secret confession, which remained as before, in its full vigour and obligation. So a short time after, that is, in the fifth century, S. Leo the Great, writing to the bishops of Campania, who had introduced some practises not authorized by apostolic tradition, he ordained as follows : "There shall be no declarations of any kind of sins given in writing and publicly read, for

it is enough that the guilt of conscience be made known to the priests alone by means of private confession." (Epist. 80, ad Episcop. Campan.) From this it is clear, that whilst the Church forbade the public manifestation of sins, she was always firm and constant in wishing and commanding the maintenance of auricular confession.

OBJECTION X.

"The Sacrament of Penance is an Inducement to Sin."

The enemies of confession, to obtain their infamous intent of preventing others to go to confession, make use of all the means in their power ; and, by this objection, they wish to appear the defenders of public morality, and, as such, with the greatest impudence and hypocrisy, say that when a Christian knows that at any time he goes to confession he is pardoned by God, confession affords him a facility to commit sin, on the plea of a ready pardon ; and, therefore, confession, far from being a means of morality, is rather a means of introducing immorality into Christian society.

To answer this objection, it is to be recollectcd, in the first place, that confession is a sacrament, instituted by Jesus Christ : hence, it is a great blasphemy to say that a sacrament produces an evil instead of a good result. Besides, this sacra-

ment having been instituted by Jesus Christ, to destroy sin in fallen man, and also for the preservation of order and the destruction of disorder in Christian society, if it be true, as they impiously maintain, that it is an incitement to sin, it would follow, that Jesus Christ, instead of affording a means for the destruction of sin and disorder in Christian society, would have furnished a means for fomenting sin and disorder in it ; and, therefore, he would have been greatly ~~mistaken~~ in this institution : which assertion is most injurious to His wisdom, goodness, and sanctity. "The confession of sins is the abolition of crimes," says S. John Chrysostom. (Homil. xxx., p. 175.) Moreover, as in everything human, malice may find a motive for abuse, so it may happen that in this sacrament bad Christians may find a motive for abuse. But who could infer from it that confession is an evil ? Lastly, the Catholic doctrine upon this sacrament must be remembered, which is, that the repenting sinner, to receive pardon, ought to go to confession with due dispositions, otherwise he could not be pardoned. Now, one of the principal dispositions and conditions for pardon, is to have a true contrition for the sins he has committed ; and true contrition means to be sorry from the bottom of the heart for having offended God, and likewise to have a firm resolution to put into execution all the means he has at his disposal *to avoid in future the*

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occasions of it. If the penitent be not truly and sincerely disposed to avoid sin in future, and not to commit it any more for ever, he cannot obtain pardon from God, so that his confession would be of no use to him, and he would be liable to eternal damnation as before. Such being the case, how can the enemies of confession maintain that confession is an incitement for the penitent to commit sin, whilst he is certain that if he goes to confession with the intention of sinning again, he would have no pardon ? Nay, he would be guilty of another sin—the sin of sacrilege ! Again, to be pardoned, a detestation of sin is required, so that the penitent ought to detest, to abhor, to hate sin, and to banish from his heart all sinful affections ; for, so long as the sinner entertains any affection for mortal sins, he is incapable of being pardoned. But this does not bring the destruction of sin ? And if so, does it not follow that confession is really a benefit, instead of a detriment, to society ? The objection, therefore, is glaringly absurd. Therefore, our bountiful Saviour, as a tender and provident physician, by the sacrament of penance, has given us an easy and prompt remedy to cure the wounds of our souls, not by its becoming an encouragement to sin, in emboldening us in the repetition of it, as our adversaries unjustly misrepresent it, but as an obvious and practical means of rising out of that deplorable state by the virtue of the keys of the

remission of sins, delivered by Him to His Church, and as a powerful preservative against a relapse, in consequence of the essential disposition requisite for a good and valid confession.

In conclusion, we quote the answer given to this objection by a Protestant clergyman, William Gresley, already mentioned. He, in the "Ordinance of Confession," London, 1852, p. 39, says : "Are we to suppress the reading of God's Word, discontinue preaching, discourage sacraments and prayers, because they have been perverted to evil ends? Surely not! Why, then, confession? Our own Homilies, in treating of this very subject, say, that 'when anything ordained by God is, by the lewdness of man, abuse, the abuse ought to be taken away, and the thing itself suffered to remain.'" And p. 41, he adds : "At any rate, confession is far too important an ordinance to be given up on this account. If thousands of souls have been saved, as I am persuaded they have been, by its instrumentality, it were most unreasonable to abolish it on account of the occasional abuses which have arisen from it."

The Second and Practical Part.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

BEFORE going to confession, the penitent ought to think the present confession may be the last for him, and so to dispose himself to perform it as if it were really the last of his life. Hence, he ought to retire into some undisturbed place, and it may be done also in the church, and there ask of God to know all the sins which he has committed from the last well-made confession ; and if he had never made a good confession, to begin from his infancy. After this the examination of conscience has to follow. This examination is so necessary, that if through neglect of it a mortal sin were omitted in confession, the confession would be of no use to obtain pardon. But this examination does not consist in harrassing his brains with an incessant research, as the scrupulous do, but in making a

diligent inquiry into the secrets of the disorderly conscience, with the diligence that is generally used in affairs of greater consequence, such as is certainly that of our eternal salvation. The Council of Trent desires to be used *diligentem sui discussionem* (sess. xiv. c. v.), "a diligent examination of himself."

This examination will be longer or shorter, according to the greater or lesser number of sins committed, and of the necessities of the soul ; for more time and diligence ought to be used by him who has not been to confession for a long time, and during that time he has frequently fallen, or has a conscience very entangled, than by him who went to confession a short time ago, and rarely fallen, or has a less entangled conscience. This diligent examination being made, if the penitent should not recollect some mortal sin being committed, having a general sorrow for all his sins, the forgotten sin is also forgiven by the Lord, as the same Council of Trent (sess. xiv. chap. 5) says : "The Church requires from the penitents nothing more, than that having examined themselves with much diligence, and gone through all the hollownesses and hidings of their conscience, to confess those sins by which they remember to have offended God Almighty. With regard to the other sins which do not occur to the memory of a diligent thinker, it is understood they are included in general in the same confession for which we say with the prophet, 'God,

cleanse me from my hidden sins." Conformably to this doctrine, S. Thomas (in 4 Dist. 17, Q. 3, Art. 4) teaches that "when a penitent remembers one of the sins he had forgotten in his former confession, it is enough that he confesses explicitly the forgotten sin, adding that, having confessed many other sins, he had forgotten that one." And this doctrine is so certain, that the following proposition has been condemned by Pope Alexander VII. : "Sins left out or forgotten in confession, on account of the imminent danger of life or other cause, we are not obliged to explain in the next confession." (Prop. 2.)

First of all, the penitent going to confession has to think of the last confession, if it was duly performed, if all mortal sins were confessed, and, if confessed, whether with sorrow for the past and purpose of amendment for the future, and if the penance given by the confessor was performed.

Then he has to examine himself on the commandments of God and the Church, the capital sins, and the particular obligations and duties of his state of life. Moreover, he should examine himself on the sins of thought, word, deed, and omission; he should take into consideration the places in which he has been, the persons with whom he has conversed, the affairs in which he has been occupied, the passions and failings to which he is most subject. To this end the following form is prepared :

ON THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

I. *I am the Lord thy God, &c.*

Thoughts.—Have you consented to any thought against faith? Have you doubted of any article of faith? Have you despaired of the divine mercy? Have you sinned in confidence of receiving pardon? Have you had recourse to the devil by express or tacit invocation of him? Have you loved any creature more than God, or as much as God?

Words.—Have you murmured against God? Spoken against religion? Taught any superstition? boasted of having committed any sin? Hindered others from doing good by false counsels? Censured those who did good?

Deeds.—Have you made use of any superstition? Have you done anything to obtain an effect not natural? Have you had communication with the devil? Have you read or retained forbidden books, or lent them to others? Have you committed any sacrilege?

Omissions.—Have you omitted to learn the principal truths of religion? Have you neglected to make acts of faith, hope, and charity for a long time? Have you omitted to have recourse to God when greatly tempted? Have you neglected your prayers? Have you neglected, from human respect, to perform any matter of obligation?

II. Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain.

Thoughts.—Have you had any intention of blaspheming God, the Blessed Virgin, or the saints, or of swearing falsely ?

Words.—Have you blasphemed God, the Blessed Virgin, or the saints ? Have you taken the name of God in vain ? Have you made a jest of holy things or the Word of God ? Have you sworn without necessity or falsely, or what you did not know whether it was true ? Have you made any oath of execration, cursing yourself or others ? Have you promised anything on oath, without intention of fulfilling the promise ?

Deeds.—Have you persuaded others to swear falsely ? Have you given occasion to others to blaspheme ?

Omissions.—Have you been careful in keeping any word you have given, or have you been negligent in fulfilling it ?

III. Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

Thoughts.—Have you had the intention of not hearing Mass on days of obligation, or of working on those days without necessity ?

Words.—Have you profaned the temple of God, by speaking in church of frivolous or bad things ? Have you laughed or joked in church ?

Deeds.—Have you worked or made others work without necessity on festivals? Have you shown due respect to the Church and to the priest?

Omissions.—Have you omitted to hear Mass or a great portion of it on the days of obligation, or have you heard it with voluntary distractions? Have you hindered persons subject to you from hearing Mass, or have you allowed them to work without necessity on festival days?

IV. Honour thy father and thy mother.

Children will examine themselves thus :

Thoughts.—Have you hated your father, or mother, or superiors? Have you desired their death? Have you treated them with contempt?

Words.—Have you murmured against them? Have you upbraided or cursed them?

Deeds.—Have you been disrespectful to them, or made game of them, or struck them? Have you been grievously disobedient to them, or made them angry? Have you fulfilled their last will especially with regard to pious legacies? Have you neglected to pray for them?

Omissions.—Have you allowed them to want the necessaries of life, or refused to help them when in great want? Have you allowed them to die without receiving the last sacraments and consolations of our holy religion?

Parents will examine themselves thus:

Thoughts.—Have you hated your children, or desired their death, or other evil ?

Words.—Have you cursed them ? Have you murmured or spoken of bad, unbecoming things in their presence ?

Deeds.—Have you forced them to undertake a state of life against their will ? Have you exposed them to any temptation or danger of sin ? Have you corrected them in anger, or punished them too severely ? Have you given them scandal by doing in their presence what you ought not to do ?

Omissions.—Have you neglected to send them to church and catechism, or to teach them their prayers, or the principal truths of faith ? Have you neglected to give them a Christian education ? Have you neglected to correct and admonish them when they deserved it ? Have you prevented them from keeping bad company ? Have you omitted to show them good example ?

A Husband should examine whether he has ill-treated his wife, or beaten her ; if he has given her cause to be jealous : if he has allowed his wife and children to want proper food and clothing ; if he has spent his money in gambling, or in the public-house, or in other bad ways, to the detriment of the family ?

The Wife will examine if she has been faithful to her husband ; if she has been obedient to him in

her matrimonial duties ; if she has been subject and obliging to him ; if she has given cause for jealousy, by her lightness of conduct ; if she has spent money in luxury and vanity ; if she has neglected to teach her children their prayers and chief things to be believed ; if she has shown partiality to one child in preference to another ?

Masters and Mistresses should examine whether they have hindered those depending on them from hearing Mass on Sundays or days of obligation ? Whether they have obliged them to work on those days ? Whether they have neglected seeing that they said their prayers ; and approached the sacraments of confession and communion when bound to do so ? Whether they have ill-treated them ? If neglected to pay them their wages ? Whether they have been careful, when able, to prevent any immorality or immodest language or other sins ? Whether they have given them bad example, or induced them to co-operate in any sin ?

Servants should examine whether they have been disobedient to their employers, in their duties or other lawful things ? Whether they have detracted them ; whether they have spent their time in idleness, neglecting their duties ; whether they have taken care of their employer's goods ; whether they have taken, wasted, or in any other way occasioned a loss to their master or mistress ;

whether they have given scandal to the children or other servants ?

V. *Thou shalt not kill.*

Thoughts.—Have you borne malice or ill-will to your neighbours, or desired to revenge yourself for injuries received ? Have you desired the death of any one, or any misfortune to happen, or have you taken pleasure in it when it occurred ? Have you been displeased at your neighbour's success ? Have you refused to forgive any one that wronged you ?

Words.—Have you desired your own or another's death ? Have you advised others to revenge themselves by killing, or otherwise injuring their enemy ? Have you injured, calumniated, or detracted any person ?

Deeds.—Have you tried to kill yourself or others ? Have you revenged yourself ? Have you beaten, wounded, or killed any one ? Have you been the cause of quarrellings, enmities, or unjust lawsuits ? Have you given bad example or scandal to others ? Have you helped or protected murderers, seditious and other bad persons ?

Omissions.—Have you neglected to hinder, when able, any serious damage to your neighbours ? Have you refused to pardon injuries, or to give proper satisfaction for them ?

VI. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Words.—Have you been guilty of bad conversation? Have you sung scandalous songs? Have you made use of indecent words, of words of double meaning, or of such as were apt to suggest impure thoughts to the minds of the hearers?

Deeds.—Have you been guilty of any acts of immodesty? Have you looked with pleasure at any immodest objects? Have you listened willingly to impure words, discourses, or songs? Have you been present at dangerous comedies or balls? Have you been guilty of indecent actions in the presence of others? Have you suggested evil to others, or induced them to sin? Have you dressed unbecomingly with bad intention? Have you read immodest songs, comedies, or books, or lent them to others to read? Have you books of this kind in your possession?

VII. Thou shalt not steal.

Words.—Have you deceived your neighbour with lies or frauds? Have you counselled or consented to the loss of others? Have you made unjust contracts and bargains?

Deeds.—Have you stolen anything, or protected thieves, or bought things that you knew or thought

were stolen ? Have you bought things for less than their value, to the injury of the sellers ? Have you deceived others in buying or selling ? Have you used false weights or measures ? Have you sold bad things for good ? Have you been guilty of usury ? Have you passed bad money for good ? Have you damaged the property of others, or, being in partnership, have you neglected to divide the gain justly ? Have you neglected to make restitution for anything unjustly taken ? Have you given compensation for the damage done to others ? Have you wasted in vice and drinking money which ought to be employed in works of justice or charity ?

Omissions.—Have you neglected to fulfil contracts or promises ? Have you kept back the wages due to working people ? Have you deferred to pay your debts or legacies ? Have you neglected to make restitution of stolen things, or repair the damages done ? Have you idled your time when paid for it ? Have you kept things found without looking out for the owner ? Have you been negligent in administering the property of others entrusted to your charge ? Have you neglected to hinder the damage of others, when you would have done it conveniently, being obliged to do so from justice or charity ? Have you given alms from the superfluities not necessary for life ?

VIII. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

Thoughts.—Have you suspected others, or judged them wrongly, without sufficient foundation?

Words.—Have you told lies, and have they been injurious to others? Have you accused others of anything of which you were not certain? Have you revealed secrets when you should keep them? Have you manifested the faults of others without necessity? Have you heard backbiting with pleasure? Have you encouraged it? Have you flattered others? Have you borne false witness, or induced others to do so? Have you deceived others in any way? Have you dissuaded anyone from doing a good work on which they were engaged, or which they ought to have done?

Deeds.—Have you, by calumnies or lies, been the cause of any damage to others? Have you been the cause of discord? Have you hindered good works?

Omissions.—Have you neglected, when able, to hinder backbiting or other injuries and damages to your neighbour? Have you omitted any act of justice due to others? Have you neglected to retract calumnies or lies injurious to others?

IX. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.

Have you taken pleasure in unchaste thoughts or imaginations? Have you had any unchaste desires? Have you tried to read, hear, or see immodest things, or what you thought were such?

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.

Have you desired to obtain the goods of others by unlawful means? Have you had the intention of deceiving others in buying or selling? Have you desired the loss of anything to your neighbour? Have you contracted debts without the intention or means to pay? Have you been disposed to injure your neighbour in any other way if you had the power? Have you had too great a desire for money?

ON THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

The Church makes precepts by the authority given her by God, and her commandments ought to be considered as divine precepts determined in their accomplishment. Consequently they must be kept, under the pain of sin; and it is necessary to confess the sins committed against the laws of the Church, as it is to confess those committed against the commandments of God. The Council

of Trent (sess. vi.) anathematizes those who say that man is not bound to observe both the commandments of God and *the Church*. Hence, S. Thomas says (in 4 Dist. 40 Art. 4): *Ecclesiae precepta habent eamdem obligandi efficaciam ut precepta divina*—“The precepts of the Church have the same strength of obligation as the precepts of God.” Hence, you should examine yourself if you have heard Mass on Sundays and days of obligation, entirely, and with attention? If you have abstained from flesh meat on forbidden days? If you have observed fasting when commanded? If you have dispensed yourself from fasting under false pretexts? If you have caused others not to fast or abstain from flesh meat on days commanded? If you have taken meat and fish at the same meal on fasting days? If you have obtained dispensation, pleading as an excuse feigned inconvenience? If you have fulfilled the obligation of annual confession and communion? If you have observed the other laws and obligations of the Church?

ON THE WORKS OF MERCY.

Have you neglected to help, when able, the poor; to correct, with charity, those who are in error; to suffer, with patience, those who were tedious to you; to pardon injuries; to counsel the doubtful; to instruct the ignorant depending on you?

ON THE DEADLY SINS.

Have you, through pride, refused to give way or humble yourself to others ? Have you, through avarice, kept in want the family or others you were obliged to aid ? Have you, in anger, seriously insulted anyone ? Have you eaten or drunk to excess ? Have you envied the success of your neighbour ? Have you taken away his good name, or caused others to think ill of him ? Have you rejoiced at others misfortunes ? Have you, through sloth, neglected to fulfil your obligations to God and your neighbour ? Have you idled your time away ?

ON THE DUTIES OF THE STATE OF LIFE.

Have you been wanting in giving good example ? Have you neglected Christian education to those depending on you ? Have you, in your occupation or business, observed justice and charity to others ?

N.B.—Those penitents who are accustomed to go often to confession, need not follow the order above given for the examination of their conscience ; but it will be sufficient to examine themselves on those points in which they more easily fall.

After this examination the penitent ought to

make an act of contrition, by conceiving a heartfelt sorrow and hatred for his past sins, and a firm purpose to sin no more. He may say : " O my God, who art sovereign goodness, and infinitely worthy to be loved by me above all things, I repent, from the bottom of my heart, for all my offences against Thee. I detest them, and firmly resolve, by the help of Thy grace, never more to offend Thee, and carefully to avoid the occasions of sin." This act of contrition is to be repeated before receiving the absolution of the priest.

ON GENERAL CONFESSION.

A general confession for some would be dangerous, for others useful, and for others necessary. It is *dangerous* for scrupulous persons, who would desire to renew it frequently without sufficient reason. It is *useful* to those who have made regularly, and with the proper dispositions, their particular confessions, but to undertake a more perfect form of life, or to change their state, or, through love of humility and perfection, desire to make one, although it would be better, perhaps, for those who have amended their lives not to enter too much into particulars, but to confess sins in a general way, acknowledging themselves great sinners. (S. Margaret of Cortona, after her conversion, was called by Jesus Christ *His poor*. One

day she asked Him when He would cease to call her *poor*, and to begin to name her His *daughter*. Our Saviour answered her He would do so as soon as she would purge her soul by a general confession. She hastened to do it, and from that moment the Lord called her His daughter.) Lastly, it is *necessary* for those who, in their past confessions, have knowingly and maliciously omitted some mortal sins, or believed to be such ; for those who, in former confessions, have told wilful lies in matters of importance ; for those who have been wanting in making their examination of conscience, by reason of which they have omitted mortal sins in confession ; for those who, in former confessions, had not sufficient sorrow for the sins committed, or firm resolution to amend their lives ; for those who, when able, did not leave the occasion of sin, or did not make restitution of things, or honour to their neighbour, or remove the scandal—in these, and other similar cases, the penitent is under an obligation of confessing the sins of his whole life, or from the time he commenced to make bad confessions, repeating over again all the sins confessed during that time, and mentioning how often he was accustomed to go to confession and communion during the year.

A fact related by S. John Climacus (Grad. 7), will prove very useful to be remembered before going to confession. There was a monk who lived

many years on Mount Sinai, weeping and fasting. On the eve of his death he was seen by the other monks as it were in a trance, having his eyes open, and looking frightened here and there. Sometimes he said : "It is so ; but I have expiated the crime by weeping and doing penance." At other times he said : "No, it is not so ; you tell a lie." Another time he, answering, said : "You say the truth ; but I wept, fasted, and ministered." In some other things, however, he said : "It is so as you accuse me, and I have nothing to answer for it ; but there is mercy in God." So he stood before the tribunal of God, and it was a dreadful thing to see the severity of the rendering reason of all the actions of his life. He died, leaving the assistants in the uncertainty of the sentence of the divine Judge upon him. Now, to avoid being accused by the devil, before the tribunal of God, at the point of death, of having made bad confessions, let the penitent go to confession with due dispositions, after a diligent examination of his conscience, being truly and heartily sorry for his past sins, and resolved, by all means, to avoid them for the future, and making an humble and clear accusation of all his sins, without concealing a single one.

CHAPTER II.

ON SORROW FOR SIN.

To make a good confession, and obtain from God the pardon of sin, by divine institution, according to the teaching of the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. can. iv.), three acts are required in the penitent: *contrition, confession, and satisfaction*—*Requiri tres actus in pœnitenti quasi materiam sacramenti pœnitentiae, videlicet, contritionem, confessionem, et satisfactionem*—that is to say, the penitent ought, 1st, to conceive internal sorrow and detestation of the sins committed, with a resolution to sin no more; 2nd, to confess, sincerely, to a lawful minister, all mortal sins; 3rd, receive the absolution from the priest to whom the confession has been made, and to be disposed to perform the penance enjoined. Let us begin from the first act, that is, contrition.

The word *contrition* is derived from *conterendo*, and means *broken*, as when a stone is broken and reduced into powder. Hence, the Council of Trent makes use of this word contrition, to show that, in sacramental confession, the heart of the penitent, or his will, through the vehemence of

grief and displeasure for having offended God, must be not only shaken, but, as it were, broken and reduced into powder. According to the same Council, contrition, taken in this meaning, is *a hearty sorrow and detestation of our sins, with a resolution to sin no more.*

1. *On necessity of Sorrow.*

Those who differ from the Catholic Church, generally pretend that it is not necessary, for God's pardon, to have sorrow for our sins, but that it is enough for a person to change his life for the better. Against such an opinion we maintain that a grief which makes us detest sin, and not commit it again, was at all times necessary to obtain God's pardon, both in the evangelical as well as the written and natural law. Indeed, without contrition on the part of the sinner, a pardon has never been given by God, as His justice, His wisdom, His love of order, and other divine attributes, require that the sinner, to be pardoned, ought to be truly repentant for the evil he has done, and really disposed to amend his life. A *new heart and spirit* are required in him, as the Prophet Ezechiel declares on the part of God (Ezech. xviii. 31); and this means that contrition has to produce, in the heart of the repenting sinner, such a change as to hate what before was the object of a sinful love,

and to love what before was an object of sinful hate. Hence, the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. c. 4) says: "To obtain the pardon of sin, this sorrow was at all times necessary ; and now to him that has forfeited his baptismal innocence, it prepares the way of forgiveness, if it be joined with a reliance on the divine mercy, and a desire of complying with other conditions of this sacrament. Wherefore the holy synod declares, that this contrition contains not a declaration of sin only, and the beginning of a new life, but likewise a detestation of that which is passed." Now, this contrition, or sorrow for having offended God, to be such as is required for the justification of the sinner, must have four conditions, that is, it must be *interior*, *supernatural*, *supreme*, and *universal*.

2. *Interior Sorrow.*

In the first place, sorrow must be interior, that is, it must spring from the heart penetrated by the consciousness of guilt. The sinner, knowing by his understanding that he has offended God, conceives and feels in his heart (that is, in his will) a lively and deep grief for it ; wished that he had not committed the sin ; he detests it ; he would cancel it ; and desires, as far as he can, to repair the evil he has done. Hence, it is not enough in going to confession to recite the act of contrition

with the tongue only, but it is necessary to accompany the words of the act of contrition with the interior detestation of his will. For, in saying the act of contrition, the heart rather than the tongue is to be moved—nay, the motion of the heart alone is sufficient, that is, to feel sorrow in the heart without giving any exterior sign of it. The reason is, because sorrow must spring from whence sin sprung, and as sin springs from the heart—as from the heart, says Jesus Christ, *come forth all sins* (Matt. xv. 18)—therefore, sorrow must come from the heart—from the will—penetrated by the consciousness of guilt, and consequently must be *interior*. Hence, God, through Joel the Prophet (ii. 12, 13), says: “Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting, and weeping, and mourning: and rend your hearts and not your garments.” From which words it is clear, that the conversion of the heart of the sinner should be first, and weeping, fasting, and mourning should follow it; and that the sinner has to rend his heart rather than his garments. Hence, in the Sermon 20, ad Fratres, attributed to S. Augustine, upon the alleged text, is said: “When the Prophet says *with all your heart*, he teaches us that the heart is the fountain of penance. It is not enough that the imagination or sensitive part of man be moved, but the heart—the will—must be moved and broken, at the consideration that God, so great and

good, has been outraged, and His chastisements deserved."

Interior contrition and sorrow of heart, moreover, requires that the repenting sinner, in making his confession, should change his heart entirely, and feel a vehement sorrow for sin ; so much so, that what was formerly the object of love and pleasure, must now be one of hatred and detestation. Suppose a man eating every day of a dish of savoury food, perceive one day, in tasting it, that it be poisonous, what does he do with regard to the food ? His ideas are, in an instant, changed ; he begins to hate and detest what was formerly his great delight, and throws away the poisoned food with disgust. The sinner took pleasure and delight in committing a sinful action ; but, going to confession, and considering the poisonous nature of sin, he must change his heart completely, and actually hate and detest that sin which was before the object of pleasure and seduction to his heart. This conversion of heart and hatred of sin is so essential, that the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. chap. vi.) declared that it must be necessarily included in contrition, saying : "The holy synod declares that this contrition contains not only the abandoning of sin, and a purpose of a new life, but also a hatred of the old."

To this interesting subject an observation of S. Augustine is very appropriate. He says that the

accusation of sin in confession does not change the heart of the penitent, but that it is the changed and converted heart which makes the accusation good and wholesome. This principle is proved by the same holy Doctor in the examples of Saul and David. Both the kings had grievously sinned, and both confessed of having sinned. Saul said to Samuel : "I violated the law of the Lord ; come, help me to disarm His wrath." But Samuel answers him : "God has departed from thee," that is, thou art not forgiven by God. On the other hand, David says to Nathan the Prophet : "I have sinned against the Lord ;" and the Prophet answering says : "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin," that is, thou hast received pardon. Now (S. Augustine continues), why was such a different answer given to their confessions, which were so alike ? The words of the confessions of the two kings are the same ; but the heart of the two kings is not the same, it is different —*similis vox, dissimile cor.* The heart of David is changed, that of Saul is not changed. David took away the affection of his heart from all evil things—nay, he conceived a great hatred and aversion towards them, and was resolved to amend his life ; so that the same S. Augustine says (Serm. cccxii.) : "In the words *I have sinned* are but four syllables, but those four syllables are powerful ; by them the flame of the sacrifice of the heart was wafted up to heaven." But Saul did not so ; he took not away

his heart from sin; he felt no hatred for the evil he had done; so that the only motive of his sorrow and repentance was the fear of losing temporal things in consequence of his sins, and hence, through want of interior sorrow, he had no pardon. In like manner it happens that two sinners, guilty, perhaps, of the same sins, go out from the tribunal of penance in a quite different state—the one condemned, the other justified—because the one spoke only with his mouth, without his heart being moved; the other spoke from his moved and broken heart more than by his mouth—*similis vox, dissimile cor.*

3. *Supernatural Sorrow.*

Sorrow or contrition must, moreover, be *supernatural*, that is, it must be produced in the heart of the sinner by the Holy Ghost, and be grounded on some motive learned by faith, not upon merely human constructions. It must be supernatural with regard to its motive, although sometimes it may be occasioned by a natural object, as illness, infamy, danger of life, &c.

In the first place, sorrow must be *produced* in the heart of the sinner by the *Holy Ghost*, for true sorrow for sin is a gift of God; so much so, that no one can repent, as far as is necessary to be reconciled with God, unless he be moved by the aid and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. This has been defined

by the Council of Trent (sess. vi. c. 3) in the following words : " If any one shall say that a man can believe, hope, love, or *repent*, as is necessary to do in order to obtain the grace of justification, without a preceding inspiration and assistance of the Holy Ghost : let him be anathema." In the second place, sorrow must be grounded upon some motive *learned by faith*; for if the sinner be moved to sorrow only by natural feelings, or merely human considerations, this would not be sufficient to obtain God's pardon. We shall explain which are the false or insufficient motives, and which are the true and sufficient ones, for effectual contrition.

Let us begin with the insufficient.

1. If a penitent be induced to repentance by a *merely natural motive*, without any reference to God or supernatural things, this motive would be insufficient for his justification, as shall be explained by some examples.

A young man, formerly hale and robust, having indulged in sinful courses, has become sickly, exhausted, and so feeble that he can scarcely stand. Finding himself in this state, he weeps and detests his sins. To ascertain the true motive of his sorrow, I make a close investigation, and find that he is sorry only because on account of his sins he is going to die. This is the only motive of his sorrow, and this motive being merely a natural one, is not sufficient for the forgiveness of his sins. Likewise, a

young woman, weeping and crying, being questioned upon the motive of her sorrow, answers me that her sin having been known in the neighbourhood, has caused the loss of her character and the hope of being married. She being sorry for her sin from a merely human motive, her sorrow is not supernatural, and consequently insufficient for the remission of sin.

A servant having stolen from her mistress, is repenting of the sin of stealing, because her mistress, having discovered what she has done, is about to send her away, and she will lose her situation. The loss, therefore, of her situation being the only motive of her sorrow, is insufficient for God's pardon.

Antiochus, after having persecuted the people of God, stolen the sacred vessels, and profaned the Temple of Jerusalem, falls dangerously ill, and finding himself near death, weeps and detests his iniquities, is resolved to do penance for them, and also to make restitution of the stolen things. To all appearances he seems to be a true penitent, worthy of pardon, but in reality he is a false penitent, a hypocrite, because his sorrow does not spring from an interior regret for having offended God, not from any motive in reference to God or everlasting life, but it arises from a natural motive—namely, the loss of his health, and the fear of imminent death ; and, therefore, he could not be pardoned. There are also Christians, who, like Antiochus, at

their death, appear sorrowful for their sins, but in reality they are not so, because their sorrow is only from fear of death, and not from any supernatural motive. S. Cyprian says, that it is not a true and sincere sorrow for their sins that urge people to repent at the hour of death, but merely the fear of death and its consequences. And S. Ambrose adds, that it is evident that he who repents not till he can sin no longer, does not quit sin, but sin quits him. The Christian sinner, therefore, must not defer his repentance until he is sick, until he is old, or until he is dying, and so risk his eternal salvation, but return to God by a sorrowful confession any time he has the misfortune to fall into mortal sin.

2. Another motive, insufficient for justification in confession, is, if the penitent is repenting of the sins he has committed on account of the *sole fear*, which is called by divines *serviliter servilis*—a sorrow only for the penalty, excluding the love of God altogether, and fit only for slaves, not for sons; and, therefore, insufficient to obtain pardon. This happens when a penitent detests sin, not as an offence against a just God, who condemns to punishment, but only because sin meets with penalty; so that he looks directly and precisely only at the penalty, without detesting the malice of sin in relation to God, by whom the punishment is justly inflicted. This motive is insufficient for pardon, because it

does not exclude in the penitent the will of sinning, which is absolutely required for pardon. The Council of Trent clearly says, that sorrow which is conceived from the fear of punishment, must be accompanied by the will to sin no more—*Si voluntatem peccandi excludat.* (Sess. vi. c. 8, de Justific.) Now, if a Christian, who knows, by faith, that mortal sin will be punished with everlasting fire, repents only on account of hell, so that the fear of hell be the only motive of his repentance, and he would be disposed to offend God again did not hell exist, he could not be forgiven. To have God's pardon, he should abhor the malice of sin in relation to God, who has inflicted such a penalty, and should be determined to commit sin no more. Let us explain it by some examples.

A thief having been discovered by a policeman, runs away, saying : “ Curse on stealing.” I ask him: “ Why do you curse stealing ?” He replies: “ It is because I fear to be taken to prison.” Again I ask: “ Were there no imprisonment for theft, would you steal again ?” “ Oh, yes,” he replies, “ I would then steal as before.” In this case, his will of abstaining from stealing is not because he detests the crime of stealing, as being against the law and the will of his sovereign, &c., but because it is the cause of his imprisonment. So, if a Christian abstain from sin only from the reason of avoiding hell, so that he would sin again had not hell

existed, this motive would be insufficient for God's pardon. King Pharaon, after being several times punished by God, confessed that he had sinned, and deserved His chastisements ; nevertheless, as that confession came not from the true fear of God, but only from the fear of punishment of God, it was not enough to justify him. "He," says S. Augustine (in Exod. ix. 35), "did not fear God, because he feared only the punishment of God ; and to fear only the punishment of God, is not to fear God with that pious fear which is proper for the just." Look at the wolf, that, being hungry, comes out of the forest to devour a sheep ; but, approaching the flock, and hearing the barking of the dogs, and seeing the shepherd with a large staff in his hand, goes back timid and trembling. Do you think that it is no more a raging wolf, but a mild lamb ? No (says the same holy Doctor) ; it is always a wolf, either when it is raging with fury or when it is trembling with fear—*lupus tremens, lupus timens, sed semper lupus*. Such (concludes the same holy Father) is the case with a Christian who abstains from offending God from the sole fear of hell—*timet ardere non timet peccare*. A person addicted to shameful sins, casting his eyes down upon hell, terrified at such a sight, trembling says : "I do not want to go to hell ; I am sorry for my sins." But, at the same time, he does not hate his sinful pleasures as the cause of offending a just

God, who condemns to hell—nay, he would wish that there would be no hell, in order to enjoy more freely the gratification of the flesh. This poor sinner cannot be pardoned by God, being precisely of the number of those who are afraid only of going to hell, not of offending God—*timet ardere*, not *timet peccare*.

The same holy Father (Ep. 12) brings an example, expressing the difference between the fear purely slavish, and the fear which is called by him *chaste*. A wife (he says) who is unchaste in her heart, does not commit evil because she is afraid of her husband, who watches her. Although she does not perpetrate any act of infidelity, nevertheless her heart is attached to it. On the contrary, an honest and chaste wife fears the crime as the cause which would draw upon her the disaster of displeasing her husband, to see him retiring from her, and lose him ; she is afraid of his wrath, because she wished her husband propitious and kind. This last is the fear which hates sin, and turns out of the heart the voluntary affection to it.

3. In the third place, sorrow is insufficient for pardon, when it is not accompanied by the hope of pardon, as it is required by the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. c. 4)—*cum spe veniae*. The sinner ought to consider that God, being omnipotent, can forgive sin ; and being infinitely merciful, wishes to forgive sin ; and being infinitely faithful in what He has

promised, He will certainly receive and embrace the sinner at any time that he, sincerely repentant, returns to Him. Hence, S. Gregory the Great (*Homil. i. 33, in Evang.*) says : "Let us consider the grace of God's mercy ; He wishes that we should make a confession with a free heart, and by this He relaxes all the evil we have done." Nor is there any sin, though the most grievous, excepted from His pardon ; as S. Bernard (*Tract. de Inter. Domo. c. 21*) adds : "There is no sin so great or enormous that a good confession does not forgive." And the reason of such a great mercy of God is because, as S. Augustine observes (*Homil. 21, ex 50*), God does not wish the death of the sinner, but that he may be converted and live. Upon these considerations the penitent must conceive the strongest and firmest hope of pardon, founded upon the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, as the Council of Trent (sess. vi. de Justific. cap. 6) teaches us : "It is to have confidence that God will be propitious on account of the merits of Christ." But if the sinner, in consideration of his sins, should say, "all is lost," "there is no remedy," "no mercy for me," "I am damned," and such like expressions and sentiments, he, not having hope in the mercy of God for pardon, could not be pardoned. The want of hope was the cause, as we presume, of the damnation of Judas, as he knew the evil he had done in betraying His divine Master and God. He made a

retraction before the synagogue, and an atonement to the honour of His divine Master, confessing Him to be just : “ I have sinned, having betrayed the blood of the just.” (Matt. xxvii. 4.) He also gave back the money he had received, but the hope of pardon being wanting, he could not receive pardon. Hence, sorrow for sin must be accompanied with the hope of pardon through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ.

4. The last thing which renders repentance ineffectual is, if the sinners *do not quit the affection for sin*; as by the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. cap. 4, de Conf.) has been declared, that contrition ought to contain *hate of the past sins—veteris vitæ odium continere*—and hate means exclusion of all the affections of the heart. Therefore the sinner cannot make peace with God, except by banishing from his heart all sinful affections, in order to give room to the love of God. Any voluntary affection entertained in the heart would be enough to make the sorrow insufficient, and the confession void of effect. It is not an indisposition to feel affection for sin, but it is indisposition to attach his heart to it. Hence, S. Thomas (in 4 Dist. 17, Q. 2, Art. 1), says : “ To the effect that sin be remitted, it is required that man should quit *entirely* the affection of sin—*ad demissionem peccati requiritur quod affectum peccati homo totaliter demittat*.

This will be better explained by some examples.

A merchant travelling by sea with all his goods, meets with so great a storm that the captain, to save his vessel, as also the lives of the passengers, commands the cargo to be cast into the sea. The poor merchant of course allows the destruction of his goods—nay, he himself, with his own hands, helps the seamen to throw them overboard. But who for all this could affirm that in doing this he has ceased to care for his merchandize ? No one would say such a thing ; on the contrary, every one would think that in casting his goods into the sea, his heart has remained as it were attached to them, and sunk with them, so that he would be very happy if he could bring them back from the bottom of the sea. Now, if a penitent, confessing his sins, keeps his heart attached to them, as the merchant did with regard to his merchandize, he is wanting in a necessary requisite for pardon, which is the quitting of affection to sin—the hate for sin—*veteris vitæ odium*. A highway robber assaulting a traveller on the road, with a pistol in his hands demands his purse. The gentleman, for the sake of his life, gives it to him ; but he still loves his money, and would have it back if possible. If the sinner, whilst he confesses his faults, keeps an affection to them, like the traveller for his purse, his confession avails him nothing, as it is not accompanied by a detestation of sin—*veteris vitæ odium*.

It is related by Cæsarius, that there was in Paris

a young gentleman who died after receiving all the sacraments of the Church. But he soon appeared to one of his intimate friends, in the midst of fire, saying to him : “I am in hell, because confessing before death that I had a criminal attachment to a person, my heart was not disengaged from her ; so that I felt that if I could recover my health I could not relinquish her ; and for not having taken away this affection from my heart, I had no pardon, and I am lost for ever.”

The motives insufficient for a true sorrow having been shown, let us pass on to see which are the motives sufficient for it.

1. I mention, in the first place, the motive arising from the *deformity* of sin, according to the doctrine of the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. cap. 4)—*ex turpitudinis peccati consideratione*. Such deformity is to be considered not by the light of natural honesty only, but by the light of faith, and in relation to God, to whose sanctity sin is opposed. Hence, faith is to be consulted in order to conceive sorrow from the consideration of the foulness and deformity of sin, and see what we learn by faith with regard to sin. Now, faith teaches us that sin is of such a malignant nature, as to contemn the law of God, and offend His bounty, mercy, immensity, and other divine attributes, and this after so many graces and benefits received from Him. It assails the Son of God, who

came into this world to rescue fallen man, and suffered so much and died on the cross for the expiation of sin. It offers contumely to the Holy Ghost, depriving the soul of the precious gifts of the divine Spirit with which it was adorned, and making it to become disfigured like a demon, and condemning it to be for ever an object of the wrath of God, whilst before it was the delight of His heart. Upon these and other considerations, likewise derived from faith, the sinner begins to think seriously of the evil he has done by consenting to sin; he feels pain and regret for his ingratitude and want of love towards God, so deserving to be honoured and loved; he is resolved to change his life; and so he disposes himself to God's pardon in sacramental confession.

2. Another motive assigned, likewise, by the Council of Trent (*loc. cit.*) is *the fear of hell—ex gehennæ metu.* The sinner, struck with terror at the consideration of the eternal fire, in which those are punished who depart this life in a state of mortal sin, and wishing to avoid such a terrible punishment of God, conceives abhorrence and hatred of sin, as the cause of his damnation, and wishes to change his life. This servile fear, although not founded upon perfect charity, is, nevertheless, contrary to sin, and causes the will of committing sin to be abandoned by him ; so that if he has not been moved to detest sin by the love of

God, he is moved by the fear of punishment. Such a punishment, however, is not considered by him as it is in itself, but as it has been inflicted by God ; and upon the consideration of sin being so greatly punished by a merciful God, he thinks what a great evil sin must be, and begins to hate it, and *love God as the fountain of all justice*, as the Council of Trent says (sess. vi. c. 6) : *Illumque tanquam justitiae fontem diligere incipiunt*. Hence, he does not fear directly and principally the punishment of God, but the *offence of God* which causes the punishment.

Upon this motive of sorrow, S. John Chrysostom (Homil. xv. ad Popul. Antioch.) says : “What is more grievous than hell ? But nothing is more useful than this fear, for such a fear gives us the crown of the kingdom of heaven.....If this fear were not good, Christ would not have preached so often and so earnestly about that punishment.” The same holy Father (Serm. 166, § 4) exhorts his auditors in this way : “Do it through fear of punishment, if you are still unable to do it through love of justice.” In fine, to say that the fear of hell is not supernatural, would be the same as to bring forward a proposition already condemned by the Church. (Prop. 5, *damnat. ab Alexand.* VIII.)

3. A third motive, according to the same Council of Trent (*ib.*), is the *supernatural fear of temporal*

punishment—ex paenarum metu. The sinner, terrified and shaken at the consideration of temporal punishments, comes to fear God who sent them ; he is displeased at having offended Him, and resolved to amend his life. The motive which induced the Ninivites to repentance was the fear of the imminently menaced destruction of their city ; and, as the Fathers of the Council of Trent observes (sess. xiv. cap. 4), by that fear, usefully terrified at the preaching of Jonas, they did great penance, and obtained the mercy of God. Hence, fear of temporal punishments, as inflicted by God, being the means of detestation of sin and return to God, is a useful fear to dispose the penitent to receive the mercy of God in the sacrament of penance. This is so true, that to think the contrary, and maintain that attrition, which is conceived from a fear of hell and *punishments*, without love and benevolence for itself, is not good and supernatural, would be to assert a doctrine already condemned by the Church. (Prop. 15, *damnat. ab Alex. VIII.*)

4. A fourth motive is the loss of heaven, which is meant by the general word *punishments—paenarum.* This is the greatest punishment which could be inflicted upon a soul that is naturally brought to aspire to paradise as the only place of rest and peace for a rational being. The sinner, upon the consideration that by a just punishment of God he

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has lost the right to heaven, promised by God to those who are His faithful servants, detests the offence of God as the cause of such a loss, he fears God, and so he is fit for pardon in the sacrament of penance.

5. A fifth motive of sorrow is to detest sin because sin is *an offence against God, who is of Himself infinitely good and perfect* in all perfections, worthy for Himself to be loved and never offended. The sinner considers the infinite bounty of God, His unequalled loveliness, His ineffable love, and other infinite attributes, and says : "What have I done by sin ? I dared to affront the divine majesty of God, the most holy, the infinitely good ; I have injured my Father, so good, so amiable, so full of all perfections, so deserving for Himself of all the love of my heart. And I, instead of loving Him, have offended Him. Oh ! that I had never done such a thing ; I would have died rather than have offended Him. He deserves so much my love, that although I had nothing to hope for or fear from Him, I would nevertheless not offend Him again." This is the noblest and best motive in order to obtain God's pardon, and it is of *perfect contrition*, while the four preceding motives are only of *attrition*, or *imperfect contrition*. The following example, taken from Fleury (Eccles. History, an. 484, lib. 30), will give an idea of the motive of perfect contrition. There was in Africa, holding the office of Proconsul of

Carthage, a Christian named Victorianus. He having been asked by Hunnericus, an impious persecutor of the Catholic faith, to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, foresaw that by resisting the will of such a cruel sovereign, he would lose not only his favour, but also his honourable rank, as well as the great amount of riches he possessed, and even his life. Nevertheless, the love of God predominating in his heart, and ruling all his operations, he gave to the king's messenger the following answer : "Tell the king that I am ready to expose myself to beasts, to fire, to any torment whatever, rather than do what he wishes of me. Although there were no heaven nor hell, I would never induce myself to be ungrateful to my Creator, who called me to Christianity, and having so benefited such a sinner as I was, I must say that He is a God of supreme mercy, of a very loving heart, of a dear and sovereign bounty, and being so, I love Him, because He is deserving of Himself to be loved by me, although I had nothing to fear or hope for from Him." By this way, Victorianus, from loving God through gratitude, passed on to love Him for His sovereign bounty and amiability in itself, and consequently with a perfect love. So, having endured the loss of his earthly goods, and all the most grievous torments and excruciating pains, he at last gave up his life, and became a most glorious martyr of Jesus Christ.

All these different motives of repentance are now illustrated by the following example. Five brothers being at dinner with their father, a dispute with him arose, which went so far that they wounded him mortally, and fled. I met them in a concealed place, and hearing them weeping and detesting what they had done, asked one of them about the motive of his sorrow. He answered me : "I am sorry because having put my hand upon my father and wounded him, I have committed a truly abominable crime." I passed on to ask the second, and he said to me : "I am sorry because my father will justly cause me to be condemned to the galleys for life." The third says : "I am sorry because I fear that the wrath of my offended father will fall severely in some way upon me." The fourth said : "I am grieved because my father, justly indignant, will deprive me of the inheritance he had promised me." The fifth said : "I am sorry because I have dared to put my hand upon a father so just, so good, so amiable, so loving, that he deserved that I should always have loved and never offended him. I care not so much for the losing of the inheritance and the punishments I may incur ; I am only moved to weep and detest my crime on account of having offended a father, who for all his excellent qualities deserved all my love." Now, in the motives of the repentance of these five sons, the different motives of the repentance of the

sinner are to be found. In the first is indicated the motive derived from the *deformity of sin in itself*, for having committed a very bad and abominable action, according to the idea we have from the light of faith. In the second is shown the motive drawn from the *fear of hell*, for having deserved, in consequence of mortal sin, to be condemned by God to hell for all eternity. In the third is traced the motive founded on the supernatural fear of temporal punishments, for having incurred in this world a just punishment of God for the sin committed. In the fourth is demonstrated the motive derived from the loss of the *eternal inheritance* of heaven, for having deserved, by mortal sin, to be deprived by God of that bliss promised to those who are His faithful servants and children. In the fifth is to be seen the motive of *perfect love*, for having dared by sin to offend God, worthy, for His infinite perfections and loving heart, to be always loved and never offended.

The four first motives are called *motives of attrition*, or *imperfect love*; the last of *contrition*, or *perfect love*. Let us see the difference between the motives of attrition and the motives of contrition.

According to the doctrine of the Council of Trent, the motives of attrition *dispose* the sinner to receive the pardon of God and His grace in the sacrament of penance. Here are the words of the synod (sess. xiv. cap. 6) : "That imperfect contrition, which is

called attrition, which is commonly conceived by the consideration of the deformity of sin, or by fear of hell and punishments, if it excludes the will of sinning, and conceives hope for pardon, (the synod) declares to be a gift of God, and an impulse of the Holy Ghost, not yet indwelling, but only moving, by which the penitent is helped to prepare himself for the way to justice. And although, without the sacrament of penance, it cannot of itself conduct the sinner to justification, nevertheless it disposes him for the grace of God, to be obtained in the sacrament of penance." From the last-quoted words of the Council of Trent, it is clear that attrition disposes the sinner to obtain the grace of God in the sacrament of penance ; but according to the same words of the Council, attrition must be accompanied by two indispensable conditions ; these are the will of sinning no more, and the hope of pardon — *si voluntatem peccandi excludat cum spe veniae*—so that if the penitent, in confessing his sins, has not the will of abandoning the sin for ever, or has no hope of pardon, he cannot receive the grace of God in the sacrament of penance, as it was already observed. With regard to *perfect contrition*, according to the doctrine of the same Council of Trent, the sinner, conceiving in his heart an act of perfect contrition, is immediately justified, and receives the grace of God also before making the confession of his sins, having, however, the will to do so. Here

are the words of the synod (sess. xiv. cap. 4) : "The holy synod teaches that although this contrition be sometimes perfect, through charity, and reconciles man before actually receiving this sacrament, nevertheless this reconciliation is not to be ascribed to contrition without the intention of receiving this sacrament, as that intention must be included in it." Therefore, through perfect contrition, pardon of sins is obtained before confession, because, as S. Peter says (1 Pet. iv. 8), "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." As the ten lepers sent by Jesus Christ to show themselves to the priest, were made clean as they went (Luke, xiv. 14), so it happens to the sinner who has a perfect contrition for his sins—before presenting himself to the confessor he is made clean. Hence, S. John Chrysostom says: "Where charity is, every evil is taken away." (Homil. viii. in 2 ad Tim.) Hence, if an accident place a Christian out of the reach of confession, the making of an act of perfect contrition, including a willingness to go to confession if he were possibly able, this sinner, were he to die, would be saved. Such was the case of a great sinner, truly converted, who, while making a confession to a holy bishop, fell down and died at his feet before receiving the sacramental absolution. It was revealed to the same confessor, that on account of his perfect contrition his soul had gone to heaven. Such also was the case with a

woman of a profligate life, who, having entered the church while S. Vincent Ferrer was preaching against the vice of impurity, conceived such an interior grief for her sins, that through the vehemence of contrition she died on the spot. At such a death everyone believed that the poor woman, on account of her bad life, had died in mortal sin, and was lost. But the holy preacher said to the people : "Be not afraid of her salvation, as I believe that she, through her contrition, is saved : pray for her." After that a voice was heard saying : "Pray not for her, but pray that she may intercede for you, as she is in heaven." (Teoli, "Life of S. Vincent Ferrer," book 2, tract 2, chap. 14.)

From the motives by which the sinner is moved to repentance, it may be judged if contrition be perfect or imperfect. Perfect contrition springs from motives of *love*; imperfect contrition generally arises from motives of *fear*. Two children having offended their father, the one says to him, "I am sorry for having offended you, because I *love* you ;" the other says, "I am sorry, because I *fear* you." Contrition leads us to repentance for the *love of God*, whom we love as our supreme and perfect good ; attrition moves us to repentance for the *fear of God*, to the end that He would not punish us. Contrition makes us repent for having offended the infinite goodness of God, worthy for itself to be loved by us, although we had nothing to hope for

or fear from Him ; attrition makes us repent, because, by offending God, we have damned ourselves, and risked the loss of eternal felicity, which we hope for, and incur eternal punishment, which we fear. Contrition reconciles the sinner with God before going to confession, having the intention to do it ; attrition can only dispose the soul to receive the grace of God in the sacrament of penance. Contrition is an interior grace of the Holy Ghost, not only inciting the soul, but dwelling actually in it ; attrition is an effect of the Holy Ghost, exciting the soul to the love of God, but not dwelling actually in it. Contrition, producing a reconciliation with God, is, by its nature, incompatible with mortal sin ; attrition, like faith and hope, is compatible with mortal sin. Now, from this comparison between contrition and attrition, it appears that contrition is certainly preferable to attrition, being more noble, more efficient to obtain God's pardon, and more worthy of the offended God. Therefore, every Christian should endeavour to excite himself to make an act of perfect contrition when he goes to confession, as well as before going to bed at night, and as often as he can during the day, and in particular in time of danger. In conclusion, we give the definition of both contritions. *Perfect* contrition is a hearty sorrow or detestation of the sin committed as being against God, who is the supreme good, and to be loved

for Himself, with a resolution to sin no more; *imperfect* contrition is a hearty sorrow of the sin conceived from the consideration of the deformity of the sin, or from the fear of hell and punishments, excluding the will of sinning, and including the hope for pardon, with a resolution to sin no more.

4. *Supreme Sorrow.*

Sorrow, moreover, must be *supreme*, that is, above all other grief; so that we have to detest, abhor, and hate sin beyond every other evil, and prefer to undergo any other evil than this one; because, says S. Thomas (Suppl. ad 3, part v., Q. 3, Art. 1), “sin that drives us away from our last end, ought to be despised above everything.” Moreover, the precept of loving God above all things, requires us to detest sin above all things, sin being the greatest enemy of God, and the greatest of all evils that can befall man. Hence, we must feel greater sorrow for the offence against God, than for incurring any misfortune in this world, or losing any temporal thing, although very dear to us, even life itself. This is the *sorrow superior to all—dolor super omnia*—required by the Council of Trent for God’s pardon. (Sess. xiv. cap. 4.) But it is not required that this supreme sorrow should be sensibly supreme, that is, more sensible than any other sorrow; because, as long as our soul is united to

the body, we should be always moved more by temporal and corporal, than by spiritual and eternal evils ; as present and corporal evils excite, naturally, our sensible appetite, more than a spiritual and distant evil. A good Christian, who loves God more than any one else, and would rather sustain the loss of all his dearest relations and friends than commit a mortal sin, met this year with two serious misfortunes—the loss of his father and the falling into mortal sin. The loss of his father caused him a great many tears, the losing God's grace cost him not a tear ; yet, not one would assert that such a pious person had not supreme sorrow for his sin, because sorrow properly consists, not in shedding tears, but in *feeling grief of heart* for the offence of God, and in abhorring and detesting it. King David having heard that, in consequence of his sin, his son should die, abandoned himself to such a grief that he was inconsolable. On the other hand, when he was reproved by the Prophet Nathan for his sins, we do not find that he 'shed a single tear. But from this can we suppose that he had not supreme sorrow for his sins ? We learn by faith that he was not only sorrowful, but that his sorrow was so perfect as to take away immediately the sins from his soul, the Prophet having said to him, "The Lord hath forgiven thee." If tears were necessary for supreme sorrow, it would follow that persons of strong

mind, who can neither show sensibility, nor shed tears, would be unable to make a true act of contrition. Nor is weeping a sure sign of true contrition ; for many times tears and sensibility are rather the effect of a sanguine and tender temperament and of the softness of nature, than of grief of heart and the motion of the will, and avails nothing for the remission of sins. Sorrow, consists essentially in the will, and it is enough to have it without feeling it ; and hence, a penitent may have a true contrition, without giving any exterior mark of it. Surely emotion, tenderness, sighs, tears, are very precious, if they be the effect and the consequence of the interior grief of the soul, as was the case of the Magdalen, who, with her tears, washed the feet of Jesus Christ, and of Peter, who wept bitterly ; but it is not so when such exterior signs are antecedent, coming only from a natural disposition of the person to sensibility and emotion. Therefore, it is not necessary that sorrow for having offended God be *intensively supreme*, but it is enough that it be *appreciatively supreme* ; that is, the offence of God should displease more than any evil whatsoever, so that we be heartily ready to sacrifice everything on earth rather than offend God, and be disposed to endure any temporal evil, and suffer every kind of affliction, rather than commit one mortal sin. Such a preference in a supreme degree does not consist only in the judg-

ment of our intellect, but precisely in the *determination* and in the strength of *our will*. Indeed, according to the above-quoted definition of the Council of Trent, *contrition* is a *hearty sorrow and detestation*; and sorrow and detestation has its seat, not in the intellect, but in the will and the heart. The intellect is soon convinced that God, for His infinite perfections, is to be preferred to all, and never to be postponed to our passions; but our will, nevertheless, does not follow the intellect; it is backward and self-willed, and often determined just to the very contrary; because, as S. Thomas says (De Malo, Q. 3, Art. 11), "passion throws a gloom upon reason and also binds it;" and (Q. 58, Art. 5) "passions corrupt the judgment." Indeed, Esau knows by his intellect that his primogeniture is to be preferred to a dish of lentils; nevertheless, in spite of the contrary conviction of his intellect, his will, vanquished by gluttony, attaches itself to that food, and prefers it to his primogeniture. Pilate likewise knows that Jesus Christ is an innocent man, but nevertheless he condemns Him to death. The following rule is given by S. Teresa to know if a soul has the supreme sorrow for her sin in line of appreciations: "He has truly this sorrow who feels in his heart such a resolution of not sinning any more, that he would rather lose all than return to sin any more." Indeed, when a penitent, in spite of his apparent

insensibility, detests sin, prefers by fact the observance of the law of God to his own temporal advantages, and he is ready to make the greatest sacrifices in order not to offend God, it is a clear sign that he has such an *appreciative* supreme sorrow of his sins. S. Felicitas, whom an injury to God grieved more than any temporal disaster, finding herself in the alternative either of seeing her seven beloved children dead or offending God, she, without hesitation, chooses that they should die rather than that God should be offended by their apostacy. A beautiful example of losing everything rather than offend God, was exhibited by Sir Thomas More, when Henry VIII. wanted him to adhere to the Reformation. It was a great pain for Sir Thomas to lose the friendship of his king, but he preferred not to lose the friendship of God, his creator ; it was a great grief to be put into prison, separated from his family and his friends, but he preferred not to be separated from God and His saints, and cast into the eternal prison of hell ; it was a great damage for him to be deprived of all his temporal goods, but he preferred not to be deprived of the eternal ones. His heart was broken by seeing his beloved wife and children destitute, and deprived of all temporal means ; but the resolution he had taken not to offend God, made him superior to all the claims of flesh and blood. He feels the natural fear of death ;

but not to incur the eternal death by offending God, he goes courageously to the scaffold. Such was the abhorrence and hatred he had for sin, that nothing could induce him to commit it—not the losing of all his temporal goods, nor the incurring of all temporal evils, nor the sacrifice of his life itself. He considered the offence against God to be the worst of all evils ; and, therefore, preferred to endure any suffering rather than offend God. Such is the beautiful example to be followed by every Christian who desires to save his soul.

5. *Universal Sorrow.*

Sorrow, in the fourth place, must be *universal*, that is, that we have to detest all mortal sins we have committed, without any restriction, any exception, any reserve ; so that if a penitent should retain affection even to one single mortal sin, it would be for him the same as to have been sorry for none ; for one single mortal sin not detested, produces separation from God in the like manner as would be produced by many, and one sin is as incompatible with God's love as many. There are many penitents who truly repent of such sins as are calculated to produce a sensible horror, such as stealing, blaspheming, and other actions disreputable in the eyes of the world ; but with regard to some hidden sins, to some unchaste pleasures, they

feel no true sorrow, no decided will of abandoning them; and thus they make sacrilegious confessions. Therefore, it is required, as an absolute condition of God's pardon, that sorrow should be extended, without exception, to every single mortal sin which the sinner has been guilty of. This sorrow for all mortal sins has been commanded by God through the Prophet Ezechiel (xviii. 30, 31), saying, "Be converted, and do penance for *all* your iniquities. Cast away from you *all* your transgressions, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit." Indeed, if a debtor is put into prison by ten creditors, he cannot go out unless by paying all his creditors, not one excepted. It would not avail him to have paid nine of them, because the remaining one would have the same right as the others to detain him in prison, and it would have been useless for him to have paid the others. So it happens with regard to sins in confession ; the penitent ought to withdraw his heart from all and every mortal sin, and from all objects which may lead to sin ; so that if he should retain an affection even to a single mortal sin, although without intention of committing any single exterior act, such interior affection would cause him to remain in disgrace with God. True contrition supposes the return of the heart to God ; but how can it be said that the heart has returned to God, if it still loves what God forbids and detests? Hence, the

repenting sinner ought to detest and hate equally all the sins he has committed, and exclaim with the holy penitent, David, "*I have hated every iniquity.*" He must remember that by not repenting of one sinful affection, it will be enough to cast him into hell, as God admonishes us through S. James the Apostle, that he who transgresses one only point, is guilty of having transgressed the whole law: "Whoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." (James, ii. 10.)

CHAPTER III.

ON THE RESOLUTION NOT TO SIN AGAIN.

THE Council of Trent, in giving the definition of contrition, was not content with stating that this consists in hearty sorrow and detestation of sin committed, but added that such sorrow and detestation of sin should be accompanied with *a resolution to sin no more—cum proposito non peccandi de cætero*. This resolution, according to the definition of S. Thomas, is an act of the will, determined and resolved to sin no more—*propositum est actus voluntatis deliberatae*. Without this purpose of amendment, no sorrow can be real, no contrition be true. Indeed, what judgment could be formed of a criminal, who, having expressed repentance, and received pardon from his king on condition that he would commit that offence no more, should say, “I am sorry for the evil I have done ; but as to the future, I cannot promise to abstain from such a crime”? Everyone would think that his repentance was not sincere ; for if it were so, he would promise, without hesitation, not to commit that crime again. Such would be the case of a sinner, who, although repenting of his past

sins, would not promise to abstain from them in future. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that sorrow should include the resolution not to sin again. Now such a resolution ought to have three characters, viz., it must be *firm*, *universal*, and *efficacious*.

1. *Firm Resolution.*

A firm resolution means, to have a resolved and determined will not to sin again ; as the Apostle (1 Cor. xv. 58) admonishes us, saying : " My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and immovable." Some Christians are of such a changeable character, that they do not keep the resolutions they have taken ; others are so susceptible of sudden impressions, that they are not firm in their determination. But the resolution not to sin again must be both durable and firm. Such was the resolution of the three children of Babylon, in the days of Nabuchodonosor. Notwithstanding the command of the king, and the menaced penalty, they did not adore the statue of the king—they did not bow down or prostrate before it. They said, with firmness : " We are prepared to die rather than to sin against the laws of God." Nabuchodonosor urges that he will order them to be burnt alive ; and they openly answer, that they are ready to die rather than offend God. They are bound, and put into the

furnace; but still they are immovable in their resolution, and sing the praises of the Lord. Such should be the firmness of a Christian: let the devil come with his temptations, let the world come with its charms, let the senses come with their pleasures, he must say absolutely, "No, I do not consent; I prefer rather to die than offend God." Equally firm was the resolution of Susanna. She is strongly tempted by two impure men, and not wishing to consent to them, she is menaced with accusation before the tribunal as an adulteress, and the loss both of honour and life would be the consequence. But she intrepidly answers: "Let me lose all, provided I preserve my innocence, and not offend God." Here is the disposition in which every Christian ought to be. He having God before his eyes, must say: "I am disposed to suffer everything rather than offend God. I will be calumniated, will be persecuted, will lose money, honour, friendship, even the necessaries of life, and life itself; no matter; I only care and wish not to offend God, and lose my soul."

2. *Universal Resolution.*

The second characteristic of this resolution is, that it be *universal*, that is, extended to all and every mortal sin in future, so that not one mortal

sin should be excepted from that resolution ; otherwise the confession would be sacrilegious.

Some propose not to commit again certain sins which to their eyes appear shameful, but at the same time they have no intention to quit some sin which is too dear to them. They would content God and the devil ; they would that God should dwell in the soul together with the devil. The devil, of course, is content with these divided resolutions, for he knows well that they lead to hell ; but God, who justly wishes the salvation of the soul, and to reign alone in it, is not content. He will forgive all sins, if the penitent proposes sincerely to abstain from all ; but He will forgive none, if the penitent has no intention to avoid all sins for the future.

A penitent goes to confession, saying that he has felt hatred and ill-will against a person who has outraged him. Of course the confessor tells him that if he wishes to have pardon of God for his sins, he must himself pardon his enemy, and root out from his heart all hatred and desire of revenge. Suppose that this penitent should say in his heart, " Well, I will forgive him ; but if I have an opportunity, I will avail myself of it to take revenge upon him ;" can it be said that he has a universal resolution of not committing sin ? No, indeed ; for if such were the case, he would have no desire of revenge. Therefore, such a penitent, to

have pardon, must say, “I not only forgive him,” but also, “I will take no vengeance against him ; and although I should have an opportunity of taking revenge, for God’s sake I will not make use of it.” Another, who had stolen or unjustly detained the property of others, goes to confession. The confessor admonishes him of the obligation of restitution, and he promises to make it ; but if he has not in reality the will to make restitution of the things which do not belong to him, or to compensate for the damages caused by him to his neighbour, his confession is sacrilegious. Nor is it enough to make restitution only of one part of the things of others, he must have the intention of making restitution of all ; and if it be impossible for him to do so at once, he at least must give back presently what he can, and have the intention of rendering all as soon as it shall be in his power to do so. On this point of restitution the devil gains a great many souls, persuading persons either that they cannot do so, or that they are not obliged to do it, when really they can and are obliged to make restitution. A person who has detracted in a matter of consequence, or even calumniated his neighbour, likewise goes to confession. The confessor, besides requiring a promise that he will do so no more, imposes upon him the obligation of repairing, as far as he can, the evil he has done; endeavouring to speak well of the person of whom

he spoke badly, and if he told falsehoods, to retract them prudently, and compensate the damage he has caused. If the penitent promises to make this reparation, but at the same time has no intention of so doing, he would not have universal resolution, which must be extended to the restitution of the good reputation he has taken away from his neighbour. In fine, if any one goes to confession, who by words or actions has given grave scandal to others, inducing some one to commit sin, this penitent must promise not only to abstain for the future from giving scandal, but, moreover, to remedy the scandal he has given, and the damage he has caused to others. If he do not promise sincerely to do what he can to that end, he will not obtain pardon, because his resolution is not universal.

3. *Efficacious Resolution.*

Resolution is called *efficacious* when the penitent is resolved to put into execution all the means he may have at his disposal to avoid sin in future, and moreover to make reparation for the sins he has committed. S. Thomas (1, 2, Q. 10, Art. 4) says, that the performance proves the resolution—*propositum optime manifestatur per operationem*—and shows whether or no it be efficacious. The following are the words of the Angelic Doctor : “Man must

punish in himself the evil he has committed ; he must fly from sin and the occasions of sinning ; and he must study to do good in proportion as he studied to do evil"—*Ut homo puniat in se quod commisit ; ut fugiat peccata et occasionem peccatorum, ut tantum studeat ad bene agendum, quantum studuit ad male operandum.* We will explain his doctrine.

In the first place, the penitent ought to study to amend the bad habits contracted by his often falling into sin—*ut homo puniat in se quod commisit.* He who after confession does not endeavour to amend his life, will fall soon after into former disorders. To avoid a relapse, he must persuade himself that, with the grace of God, he can correct any sin whatever, although for many years he may have been habituated to it. God, if He be confidently invoked to help him, will not fail to assist him, giving him such strength and vigour, that he may exclaim with S. Paul, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." He must not say, "I desire to abstain from that sin, but I cannot ; I am unable to overcome the difficulty—I have no power for so doing ; I am too much habituated to it : I cannot." Whoever should speak in such a way, would give to understand that the command of God to abandon sin, and to commit it no more, is an impossible command, is a precept impossible to comply with ; but to say such a thing would be impiety—an enormous crime ; for as the Council of Trent teaches

us, God does not command anything impossible—*Deus impossibile non jubet*; but commanding anything, He requires that we do what is in our power, by making a right use of our free will—*sed jubendo monet facere quod possis*. And as we can do nothing meritorious in reference to eternal life without the help of His grace, God is ready to come to our assistance with His powerful grace, if we confidently ask it, in order not to fall into sin again—*et adjuvat ut possis*. Therefore, a Christian, through the grace of God, which he receives by prayer, may abstain from any sin whatever. S. Augustine, before his conversion, thought it almost impossible to abstain from sinful pleasures, to which he was much addicted; but at last, having sincerely resolved to abandon sin and change his life, and having resolutely put himself to the task, he succeeded so well, that, after his conversion, he asserted that now he felt the greatest pleasure in having abandoned those sinful satisfactions which he thought he could not abandon. Here are his words: *Quod amittere metus fuerat, jam dimittere gaudium fuit*. The relapse into sin must be attributed either to want of prayer when tempted, or neglect of the means suggested by the confessor in order to avoid relapsing.

In the second place, the penitent ought to avoid sin and the occasions of sinning—*ut fugiat peccata et occasionem peccati*. Both the natural and divine law require that every one should fly from the

occasions which lead to sin. The Holy Ghost says, that he who loves the danger shall perish in it ; and Jesus Christ adds, that if your eye, your hand, or your foot, be the cause of scandal, that is, of sin, it must be taken away. Is there anything dearer to human life than the eye, the hand, and the foot? Nevertheless, Jesus Christ, to show the necessity of sacrificing everything rather than offend Him, commands the destruction also of these members if necessary ; “for it is better to enter into everlasting life with one eye or hand or foot, than to go to hell with both eyes, hands, and feet.” Hence, God commanded the Israelites not to form a league or intermarry with strange women, nor with those who did not fear God, saying that they would be their ruin—*sunt vobis in ruinam*—they will certainly cause you to transgress the law of God—*certissime avertent corda vestra* (3 Reg. xi. 2)—nay, they will go so far as to induce you to deny your faith, and to offer incense to idols—*fornicari facient filios vestros in deos suos* (ib. iii. 16). It is not possible for a young man to keep company with bad companions, and remain innocent. They, in the beginning, will turn him away from good, afterwards will instruct him to do evil, and at last will urge him to fall into abominable disorders. It is not possible for a young woman to indulge in improper intercourse with persons of a different sex, and keep her heart pure. It is not

possible for her to expose herself to certain occasions, without falling into sin. Dina, the daughter of Jacob, exposed herself to danger, by going about alone through the streets of the town of the Sichimites, and she lost her virginity and honour. If Eve had not talked with the tempter, and looked upon the forbidden fruit, she would not have been seduced by him. Had David taken away his eyes from Bethsabee, he would not have fallen into the most grievous sins. Till that time he had been faithful to God ; so that in Psalm xvi., which, according to Origen, he wrote a little before his falling, he said to the Lord : "Thou hast proved my heart, and visited it by night. Thou hast tried me by fire, and iniquity hath not been found in me." He had passed an innocent youth ; he had arrived at an advanced age ; but poor David miserably fell when he thought himself strongest, and less subject to falling. The presence of the object in an instant influenced his hitherto chaste heart, and carried it away ; the impure flame set fire to his senses ; and in a moment, almost without knowing how it happened, were his virtue and chastity reduced to nothing, and he became an adulterer, a man of blood, a great sinner. So we find, related by himself, in Psalm lxxii. : "My heart hath been inflamed ; my reins have been changed : and I am brought to nothing, and I know it not." After such an example, who

could say, “I have been at other times in great risks, and I did not fall, neither shall I fall at this time ; I am strong ; I do not fear.” Say not such a thing ; for if so holy a man as David fell, who will presume to say that he will not, in the like occasions—*habemus thesaurum in vasis fictilibus.* S. Augustine used to say : “ I have witnessed the downfall of many men, from whom before I apprehended no more fear than for an Ambrose or a Jerome”—*Multos corruisse vidi de quorum casu non magis dubitabam quam Ambrosii et Hieronymi.* Therefore, to avoid falling into sin, there is no other course than to fly from all occasions which lead to sin. And then the same Doctor says : “ If you wish to obtain victory, fly away”—*Apprehende fugam si vis obtinere victoriam.* This is to be done when occasions can be avoided. But if occasions should be *necessary* and *inevitable*, so that it would be impossible to avoid them, as may be the case of a son or daughter, who could not leave their father’s house, in which there is danger of sin, in these painful circumstances the person is obliged to exert himself in such a way as to make the occasion remote which is proximate, by using all the means which may be suggested by a prudent confessor for avoiding sin. A person who is thrown into such near occasion, provided he pray fervently and is obedient to his confessor, will fall no more into his former sin, as God does

not fail to assist by His grace those who are in necessary and inevitable occasions of sin. Joseph, finding himself in a necessary occasion (not being able as a slave to quit the house of Putiphar where he was tempted), received the grace of not falling into sin, and obtaining a full victory when violently tempted by his mistress. Susanna does not fall into adultery, because she does not expose herself to the occasion, but she is against her will taken by surprise. Therefore, a penitent, when in a necessary occasion of committing sin, must take the advice of his confessor, and put punctually into execution all the means he suggests in order to make the peril of sinning remote. But if he expose himself to an unnecessary occasion, in such a case he could not be absolved, unless he be resolved to quit that occasion for ever, although it would cost him many sacrifices and loss of temporal things, as the salvation of his soul should be preferred to any misfortune in the world. Peter and Matthew both received the light of faith and the call to the apostolate. Peter returned to his former employment, but Matthew did not return to his. Why so? Because the employment of Peter could be easily exercised without dangers to the soul, but the employment of Matthew being very dangerous, and an occasion of sin, he left it entirely. Woe to him who exposes himself voluntarily to the near occasion of committing sin! A young gentleman,

some years ago, had made in Rome a spiritual retreat, and had resolved to break for ever an occasion he had of committing sin. On quitting the house of the retreat, he expressed to his spiritual director his intention to persuade the person with whom he had the sinful intercourse to go herself into some religious house, and make a retreat and change her life. The prudent director, on account of the dangers he foresaw in it, forbade the young man to go himself to her, and suggested that he should employ some other person in this undertaking. He, however, replied that he wished to go himself, finding himself strong enough to resist any temptation; and he went to her having in his hand the ticket of her admission for the retreat in a religious house. The meeting began with gravity and serious conversation about spiritual things; by degrees they passed to indifferent ones; and, in the meantime, the fire of the passion, suppressed but not extinct, began to burn again, and a new sin followed. But as soon as the sin was committed, the miserable young gentleman fell down on the ground dead and ghastly! Here is the punishment deserved by him who inconsiderately exposed himself to the occasion of sin! This frightful case, however, was the cause of the conversion of the woman.

In the third place, the purpose of amendment will be efficacious if the penitent takes the resolu-

tion of changing his life by doing in future just the contrary of what he did in the past—*ut tantum studeat ad bene agendum, quantum studuit ad male operandum.* Looking back at his past life, the penitent must make a reflection on the sins by which he most offended God Almighty, and make compensation for those offences by expiatory acts of the contrary virtues. Let the proud and haughty punish himself by making acts of humility and self-abasement ; the avaricious man must cure his soul of this passion by acts of liberality towards his neighbours, especially towards the poor ; the man addicted to intemperance must mortify himself by abstinence in eating and drinking ; the lascivious man must check his rebellious senses by restraining and subjecting them to vigorous control ; the man subject to wrath must control his anger by following the meekness of Jesus Christ ; the scandalous, who have caused the spiritual ruin of others, must strive by good example, by words, and by actions, to lead others to good ; those who formerly ran after honours and worldly pomps, must now seek contempt and voluntary poverty ; he who was the enemy of the cross of Jesus Christ, must bear it patiently and willingly ; in fine, as the damned in hell will be tormented, especially in those propensities of soul and senses of the body by which they sinned most in this life, so the penitent ought to punish himself

in those senses of the body and propensities of soul by which he sinned most in former times. Zacheus, having had a true and efficacious purpose of amendment, and being intent upon the cure of avarice, gave half of his goods to the poor; and also to make compensation for the frauds he had committed, he gave back to such persons as were defrauded by him, four times more than he had cheated them of. The blessed John Colombini having read, by chance, the life of S. Mary of Egypt, began to despise the things of this world, and do the contrary of what he had done before. Formerly he was so avaricious that he very seldom gave to the poor, and would not consent that alms should be given at home, and in making payments tried always to take away something from what was due. But after such reading, he often gave twice as much as he had been asked, and to the sellers he used to give more than was due. If before he went seldom to the church, he afterwards went frequently; if before he did not care for fasting, afterwards he fasted rigorously and very often; if before he paid little attention to prayers and other good works, he gave himself up afterwards to continual prayer and exercises of good works. S. Margaret of Cortona, to remedy the scandal of her immodest dressing, clothes herself in the habit of a penitent; to disguise the beauty of her face, which had been the cause of

many sins in others, she wished to cut away her nostrils and the upper lip, with a razor purposely prepared ; to make amends for the bad example given by her on account of her licentious and wanton life, she showed herself everywhere dressed as a penitent, with her eyes cast down and modest, with an humble behaviour, and publicly asking pardon in the church of the evil she had done. S. Paula, a Roman matron, who, indeed, had not been a great sinner, nevertheless emaciated her body by fasting and diverse instruments of penance, and her eyes were two fountains of tears to weep over her supposed sins. S. Jerome (Epist. 27, ad Eustoch. t. iv.), in a letter to Eustochium, the daughter of S. Paula, presents her mother speaking thus : “ My face must be disfigured, which I often, contrary to the divine precept, painted with deceitful colours ; the body be afflicted that was indulged in softness ; laughter be redeemed by tears, and sackcloth take the place of smooth linen and expensive silks.” In a word, she endeavoured to please God in those very things in which she pleased the world. This is the way not to return to former disorders. Hence, S. John Chrysostom (Homil. x. in Matt. vii.) says : “ Do works, said the Baptist, worthy of penance. But in what manner is this to be done ? By doing such works as are contrary to our vices. Thus, have you laid hands on the property of others ? Begin to give

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away your own. Have you been long a fornicator? Abstain even from the lawful use of the marriage-bed. Have you injured any one in discourse or deed? Return words of blessing, and strive to soften those by kindness who may strike you. It is not enough to draw the dart from the body of the wounded man, healing remedies must also be applied. Have you indulged in delicacies and drunkenness? Fast and drink water."

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE ACCUSATION OF SINS.

THE second act of the penitent in the sacrament of penance, is confession, or accusation, of sins; and this, for the falling Christian, is as necessary as baptism is for those who are out of Christianity. Hence, S. Thomas (Suppl. 3 p. Q. 6, Art. vi.) says : "Confession is a sacrament of necessity, like baptism ; and as nobody may be dispensed from the baptism, so can none be from confession."

Now, in order that the accusation of sins in confession be rightly done, it must have principally three qualities, viz., it must be *humble*, *simple*, and *sincere*, as S. Bernard says : *Omne quod remordet conscientia confitere humiliter, pure, fideliter.* (Serm. 16.)

1. *Humble Accusation.*

The necessity of humility in the penitent who goes to confession, is discovered by the consideration of the offices the confessor holds in the sacrament of penance. He holds three offices, or charges, namely, of father, of physician, of judge ; whilst

the penitent represents the son, the sick man, the criminal.

The confessor is a *father*, the spiritual father of the soul, and the penitent is his spiritual son, who presents himself to his father. And being so, is it not his duty to present himself to him in an humble behaviour, with eyes cast down, and with a respectful countenance? The prodigal son, repenting of his faults, presented himself to his father in the most humble manner, and then obtained pardon immediately. Magdalen, likewise, was pardoned, because, overcoming all human respect, she remained in an humble posture at the feet of Jesus Christ.

In the second place, the confessor holds the office of spiritual *physician*, who ought to know the infirmities of the soul in order to cure them, and the penitent represents the sick person to be cured before the doctor. Now, what is the conduct of the sick man? Does he not frankly indicate the symptoms of his illness to him, and place himself wholly in his hands? So the penitent must declare with great humility to his confessor the whole state of his soul, and depend entirely upon him.

The third office of the confessor is that of *judge*, established by Jesus Christ to judge the things relative to the soul of the penitent, and the penitent is the guilty person who presents himself to

his judge. Now, as the guilty person, knowing his crime, presents himself with all humility before him who has to judge him, so the penitent, being aware of his sins, ought to present himself with all humility before the confessor, having to remember on such an occasion that he, on account of mortal sin, has become guilty of high treason, having betrayed his divine majesty ; and consequently he is a miserable slave of the devil, and worthy of eternal fire.

Many penitents are wanting in this humility. Some make complaints if the confessor tells them to come again before receiving absolution, not considering that this is not for the pleasure of the confessor, but for the spiritual good of the penitent. Others, being commanded by the confessor to do such and such things, they answer they cannot do them, while they are well able to do them. The penitent may humbly expose to his confessor the reasons and circumstances why he thinks he should not be able to do something advised by him ; but after this, if the confessor judges that he can and ought to do it, the penitent is obliged to follow the command of the judge of his soul. Whoever submits himself humbly to the advice of his confessor, is not deceived ; he would be deceived who refuses to follow the judgment of the confessor, in order to follow that of his own will. If the confessor should mistake, the error will not be attributed by

God to the penitent. Some, likewise, in confessing their sins, lay the fault on others. They say : "I have committed such a sin, but it has been occasioned by my husband or wife, my son or father, my neighbour or friend; I could not help it; it has not been my fault ; the blame lies with those who compelled me to do such a thing." These penitents make use of the same excuses as our first parents did after having sinned. Adam laid the blame upon Eve : "The woman," he said, "whom Thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree." (Gen. iii. 12.) Eve laid the fault upon the serpent : "the serpent deceived me." (ib. 13.) But such excuses did not avail them, as God, who saw the sin in their heart, by the punishment given them for it, gave them clearly to understand how little He valued such excuses. S. Austin says (Hom. xii. ex. 50) : "If you excuse yourself, the sin remains in yourself, and you are guilty, not only of the sin you have committed, but also of this pride, for not having wished to confess it." And the same Doctor (Enarr. in Psal. 1.) adds : "Have you sinned ? Do not defend the sin ; let this come in confession, not in defence." And S. Thomas (in Suppl. 3 p. Q. 7, Art. 4) says : "Confession must be humble, so that the penitent ought to be persuaded that he is miserable and infirm." Therefore, to make an humble confession, the penitent ought to do as David did after his sin of

vanity. Prostrating himself before the majesty of God, he exclaimed : “ O Lord, it is I. I am he that have sinned I have done wickedly. Let Thy hand, I beseech Thee, be turned against me.” (2 Reg.xxiv. 17.) The prodigal son, when repenting, came back to his father’s house : he did not lay the fault on his friends or on others, but only on himself, for the evil he had done. He said : “ Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee : I am not worthy to be called thy son.” (Luke, xv. 18, 19.) The penitent must follow the example of the publican, who, standing afar off, full of confusion for his sins, did not dare to raise up his eyes, but with his head cast down, humbly asked for mercy, saying, “ God, be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke, xviii. 13.)

2. *Simple Accusation.*

S. Thomas (Opus. 54) says : *Dicat necessaria et dimittat superflua. Pure dic peccata tua et simpliciter te accusa*—“ Let him confess the things which are necessary, and leave the things which are superfluous. Say simply your sins, and accuse yourself with simplicity.” Simplicity in confession requires that useless, vain, or unnecessary things have no place, but that which is necessary be said, in order that the confessor may know well the state of the

soul of the penitent. Some are wanting in this simplicity by excess, and some by defect. They fail by *excess*, when they relate stories or deeds of themselves or others, which are not necessary, or by confessing their sins individually; *e.g.*, “I have blasphemed three times S. Peter, six times S. Anthony, once S. Francis;” whilst it is enough to say, “I have blasphemed ten times the saints;” or making use of a long concatenation of words to say one sin that may be expressed in a few words. They fail, on the other hand, by *defect*, when they say too little; so that the confessor cannot know the nature of sins and the number of them, to be able to form a right judgment upon the state of the penitent. Some confess themselves in a *general way*: “Father, I am a great sinner. I have sinned in thoughts, words,” &c. Others make their confession *conditionally*: “If I have been guilty of detraction, or bad thoughts, of omitting to go to Mass,” &c. All these ways of confessing are equally to be disapproved of. The simplicity required in confession consists in manifesting to the confessor all sins committed since the last good confession—showing the sins that are certain as certain, the sins that are doubtful as doubtful, and declaring all with just so many words as are necessary to make the confessor understand the state of the conscience of the penitent. On this subject it may be observed, that it would be a great mistake to go to confession in order to tell the

confessor his own distress and bad circumstances, and move him to give him alms, or recommend him to somebody else. To go to confession with this end, the penitent would expose himself to be guilty of sacrilege. S. Philip Neri, although he was very charitable to the poor, did not absolve those who went to him to relate in confession their poverty or some other want, to be relieved or assisted by him in a merely human concern. Likewise, the servant of God, Vincent Pallotti, on such occasions, used to send the penitent to another priest to make his confession, keeping for himself the pious office of assisting the person in his temporal wants, if the same deserved to be helped.

3. *Sincere and Full Accusation.*

Sincerity or *integrity* of confession requires that the penitent confess sincerely and fully all the sins which he can, and is obliged to confess without omitting a single mortal sin. As the sorrow and purpose must be extended to all sins, so the accusation must embrace all sins the penitent has committed; so that if he should maliciously conceal only one mortal sin, his confession would be sacrilegious and of no effect for the remission; as was declared by the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. cap. 6), in the following words: "He who purposely

conceals any sin cannot have the remission of it; because if the sick man is ashamed to show to the physician his wound, the medicine could not cure what was unknown." Hence, S. Austin says (Homil. 12, ex. 50) : "God heals thee, on condition, however, that thou confessest thy wound;" and (*loc. cit.*) adds : "The devil wishes this, that we should not confess our sins, in order that he may make of it a matter of accusation against us before the tribunal of the eternal Judge." Therefore, S. Thomas (Suppl. 3 p. Q. 6, Art. 4) concludes : "In order that confession be properly made, it is required that the mouth must agree with the heart, that is, that the mouth should accuse what his conscience considers to be a sin, and that the penitent should manifest to the priest everything he has done without concealing anything." Sins, therefore, are to be confessed in their number, in their species, and in their circumstances. Sins, in the first place, are to be confessed in their *number*, that is, the penitent ought to declare how many times he had committed those sins which he confesses. If he knows precisely the number of his sins, he ought to tell the exact number ; if he does not know the certain number of them, he must tell the probable, the approximate number—at least he should say how long he has lived in such a sin, and during that time how often in the month, in the week, in the day, he has been guilty of it. It is required

to explain how many times the same precept has been broken ; *e.g.*, if any one eats meat in a day of abstinence, he commits a mortal sin any time he takes meat in the same day, because the essence of the precept of abstaining from meat consists in the abstinence; so that the number of the sins is measured in proportion to the number of the times that abstinence has been broken. The number of the sins springing from one action is also to be confessed ; *e.g.*, when a person slanders or detracts many at once, or when he is guilty of slander or detraction before many persons, or has given scandal or induced several people to sin at once. In all these cases, the penitent ought to tell the confessor, as far as he can, the number of persons whom he slandered, or before whom he defamed his neighbour, or to whom he gave scandal. It is, moreover, necessary to explain the damage and grievous consequences resulting from the sin that has been confessed ; *e.g.*, the damage caused to such a person in consequence of the calumny, the robbery, the injustice, &c. Thus, if one kills several people at once, he commits as many mortal sins as were the persons killed. Likewise, a man hating at once different persons, ought to explain to the confessor how many persons were hated by him, as the number of the sins increases in proportion of the number of persons killed or hated by him. Hear what the Council of Trent says upon the number of

sins : " As men become enemies of God, and deserve His punishment for every mortal sin, although of thought only, it is also necessary that they should ask pardon of God through a clear and humble confession of all." (Sess. xiv. cap. 5.) And S. Thomas (in Suppl. 3, Q. 9, Art. 2) says : " The priest hearing confession acts the part of God, and therefore confession is to be made to God in contrition. Hence, as there would be no contrition if a man did not feel sorry for all his sins, so there would be no confession if he did not confess all the sins which occur to his memory." And this sincere accusation of *all* mortal sins, and of *each one* in particular, has been imposed, not by the Church, but by Jesus Christ Himself, and, consequently, it is of divine right, as has been already proved by us, and was defined by the same Council of Trent (sess. xiv. de Pœnit. can. 7) in the following words : " If any one should dare to say that in the sacrament of penance for the remission of sin, it be not necessary of divine right to confess all and every mortal sin which occur to the memory, although hidden.....let him be excommunicated." In the alleged text, the Fathers of the Council of Trent say, that for the remission of sins it is necessary to confess all mortal sins which *occur to the memory*; and by this we learn that it is not required that confession should be *materially* entire, but that it is sufficient it be *formally* entire, that is, that to

have to confess all such sins as, after a diligent examination of the conscience, occur to our memory. Hence, if a penitent, notwithstanding his exactness in the examination, of his conscience, should not recollect a mortal sin, or should forget it at the time of confession, this omission is in no way criminal, and does not make the confession null ; the only obligation for him in this case being to confess such a sin when it occurs to his memory. Nay, if he recollects it before going to communion, there is no occasion to go again to confession before receiving the blessed sacrament, as such a sin, in consequence of the intention the penitent had of confessing all his sins, and of the sorrow he had for all sins, has been already remitted and pardoned by God, through the absolution in the last confession ; therefore, it is sufficient to mention the forgotten sin in the next confession.

In the second place, sins must be confessed according to their *different species*. Sin differs in the *species*, first, when it is opposed to different virtues, *i.e.*, when opposed to justice, or temperance, or religion, or charity, &c. ; secondly, when sin is opposed to precepts formally diverse between them, that is, when they have different ends, or are directed to a diverse aim, or guided to the exercise of different virtues. Suppose a penitent to have got for penance at confession to fast on such a day, in which occurs also the fasting of the

ember week ; if he omit wilfully to fast, he is guilty of two sins of a different species, because the two precepts he violated are different, not materially and for the number, but formally and in their substance, on account of their different end ; because the Church, in the precept of fasting, looks principally at the exercise of temperance, while the confessor, besides temperance, looks at the sacramental satisfaction enjoined as an integrant part of the sacrament of penance, for the debt of his sins ; and consequently the spirit and the end of these two precepts are diverse. Thirdly, when sin is opposed to different branches of the same virtue ; *e.g.*, justice has three distinct objects, or relations, to our neighbour : 1. not to offend him in his life or person ; 2. not to offend him in his reputation, which is his civil life ; 3. not to offend him in his substance or temporal profits. Hence, it is not sufficient to say in confession, "I have sinned against justice," but it is, moreover, required to explain in what branch he offended justice, if by killing, by slandering, by stealing, &c. So, charity has many relations ; and one may commit sin against charity by giving scandal, by not correcting when correction is useful, by not giving alms to the poor, having the possibility to do so, by making some person angry, &c. ; and then it is not enough to say in confession, "I have sinned against charity," but it must be expressed in what he

sinned against charity. Fourthly, when sin is opposed to the same virtue in a far distant way ; *e.g.*, the sins of avarice and prodigality are opposed to the same virtue of liberality ; but avarice by defect, and prodigality by excess. Fifthly, when sin is opposed to the same virtue in a manner very different on account of its deformity ; *e.g.*, one may sin against charity by striking one's neighbour in a terrible way, to make him almost die ; it would not be sufficient to say, "I have struck my neighbour," without adding something else.

In the third place, the circumstances also of the sin must be explained. *Circumstance* is an accidental addition to the action, coming from the Latin *circumstat*, and is called accidental, because the action would stand without such an addition. It is, therefore, to be considered in confession, if any of the following circumstances had influence in the sin which has been committed. The *time* in which the action was done, if on a festival day, or fasting day, or other particular occasion ; the *place* where the action was performed, if sacred, if public, &c. ; the *state* of the person who did the action, if a layman or clergyman, if married or unmarried, &c. ; the state of the person with whom the action was done ; the co-operation of others called to our sinful action ; the means employed for it, and the end prefixed in doing such a thing—if he stole in order to get drunk, or if he

gave alms to be praised by others, &c. : all these supporters of the sinful action, when involving some particular malice, or increasing it, are called circumstances of the sin. Now, a circumstance may be such as to induce two, three, or more forms of malice, formally different between them in the same crime, and then it is called circumstance *changing the species* of the sin. On the other hand, if a circumstance does not induce a new malice to the sin, but only aggravates its malice in its sphere, it is called a circumstance *aggravating* the sin. Finally, aggravating circumstances may be also considered as *notably aggravating* the sin, or *not notably aggravating* the sin. Let us now explain the theory of the different circumstances here mentioned. First, all the teaching of the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. cap. 1) upon this matter is to be considered. Here are the words : “There are to be explained in confession those circumstances which change the species of the sin, as without it sins could not be entirely explained ; and they could not be known to the judge, and the confessor could not rightly judge of the greatness of the crimes, nor could impose the requisite penance for them.” From the alleged words, it is clear that the circumstances which *change the species* of the sin are to be explained in confession. With regard to the circumstances not effecting such a change, the Council does not speak ; but the

Catechism of the same Council of Trent (de Pœnit. s. xiii. p. 232, Rome, 1761) says: "Not only are great and important sins to be confessed, but also the circumstances of every sin which increase notably their malignity." And it is to be observed, that the theologians who wrote the Catechism had been present at the Council of Trent, and, therefore, they knew well the mind of the Council upon this point, and, notwithstanding the silence of the Council, having declared the obligation of confessing the circumstances that *increase notably* the malice of the sin, this positive fact seems to have great strength against the negative argument of the silence of the Council thereupon. Moreover, S. Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, who also was present at the Council of Trent—nay, may be called the first promoter of it—in his "Instructions to Confessors," in which the spirit of the synod is transfused, imposes the same obligation of confessing circumstances *notably aggravating* the sin. And the same is the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor, S. Thomas (Sent. 4, Dist. 16, Q. 3, Art. 2). Indeed, it seems plain that notably aggravating circumstances, notably changing the judgment of the confessor, are to be confessed to him, in order that a right judgment may be made by him. But there is no question that circumstances *changing* the species of the sin are to be explained in confession, it being admitted by all

divines, and commanded by the Council of Trent. Hence, all circumstances which may add a new malice to the sinful act, on account of their distinct malice, or opposition to different virtues or precepts, or to the different branches or opposite ways of the same virtue, are to be confessed, because the action, although physically one, has become, in such a case, morally double ; *e.g.*, if a penitent has stolen a chalice from a church, it is not enough to say, "I have stolen an article of value," but he must add that such a thing was sacred, because the circumstance of its being sacred doubles the sin of stealing, adding to it the sin of sacrilege. Again, if a penitent has struck a person consecrated to God, it is not enough to say in confession, "I have struck a person," but he must add the quality of the person ; because the circumstance of his being consecrated to God makes the sin of striking a sacrilege, to which a censure also is annexed. Likewise, if the penitent had committed an act of immodesty with another person, or had only the wish to do so, he must say if such a person was married, or consecrated to God, or his near relation ; because the circumstance of being married, adds the malice of adultery ; the circumstance of being consecrated to God, adds the sacrilege ; and the circumstance of being a near relative, adds the incest. Even the circumstance of the sacred place in which the sin may have been committed

is to be explained, for such a circumstance super-adds the malice of sacrilege to the sin. But the penitent must be careful not to name the person with whom he committed the sin; as S. Thomas (in 4 Dist. 16, Q. 3, Art. 2) says: "Nobody shall mention in confession the person with whom he sinned, because in confession we ought to keep the reputation of others as far as we can." Hence, the condition only of the person, not his name, shall be mentioned. Upon this particular, two constitutions have been made by Pope Benedict XIV. —the first beginning *Suprema omnium ecclesiarum*; the other, *Tibi primum*; and in them confessors are strongly forbidden not only to ask the name of the accomplice in the sin, but also to ask the penitent's name, dwelling, qualities, and other unnecessary circumstances.

Let us pass to examine the circumstances which aggravate *notably* the sin. These, also, according to the above-mentioned authorities, are to be confessed, and are, *e.g.*, if the penitent had stolen a thousand pounds, in which case it would not be enough to say, "I have stolen to a considerable amount," but he must explain how much he had stolen, in order that the confessor may better know the state of his soul. Aggravating circumstances, in particular, should also be confessed when they make a sin a reserved case, or when a censure is annexed to it on account of that

circumstance. Finally, the penitent ought to confess those aggravating circumstances about which he may be asked by his confessor.

Nor is it sufficient to confess outward sins, but also inward ones must be confessed likewise, as was declared by the Council of Trent (*can. sup. cit.*) : "The penitent ought to confess every mortal sin, although the most *hidden* ones, and against the two last precepts of the Decalogue." In addition, it is to warn against two opposite errors into which a penitent may fall with regard to inward sins. Some believe that there is no obligation to confess inward sins ; others, on the contrary, reckon as a sin every bad thought which may occur to their mind, or sensual motion they feel in themselves. To undeceive the first, it is to be observed, that human legislators do not rule, and cannot rule, any but exterior and visible actions ; on the contrary, the divine Legislator goes to the very spring of the human actions, that is, to the mind and heart of man, ruling the most hidden things, and searching every thought of the mind and every affection of the heart, forbidding not only the crime, but also the thought and intention of perpetrating it. Therefore, the spring of every sin is in the heart, as our blessed Saviour says : "*Ex corde exirent cogitationes mala, homicidia, adulteria,*" &c. Hence, the essence of sin is in the inward approbation of the will. It is,

then, easy to commit inward sins, without being accompanied or followed by any outward act ; and there is a precise obligation of confessing such sins, and of explaining the number and species of them. These may be committed when a person *takes pleasure in* or *desires* a thing prohibited by the law of God ; *e.g.*, a sin against purity, committed at a former time, occurs to the mind, and the person, instead of reprobating and rejecting it, stops to think of it with pleasure and delight. This person, by doing so, has committed a mortal inward sin of the same nature as that he committed when he did the outward sinful action. Another conceives the desire of sinning with another person ; he likewise has committed a mortal sin, as he would have committed if he had done the outward action of sin. A thief, whilst he is looking at an occasion to steal, seeing persons coming towards him, runs away, leaving everything untouched ; but he has already committed a mortal sin, because he wished to steal. A person who has been offended, if he conceives hatred against his offender, and wishes him dead or other grievous evil, has committed an inward mortal sin. Such inward mortal sins may be easily committed, and in a great number, even in the course of a single day, as it is very easy to consent to a bad thought, because it happens in a moment, and such a moment is the moment after reflection. This decides the commit-

ting of the sin; for any time that a person takes deliberate pleasure in a thing grievously sinful, or desires a thing grievously sinful, always commits a mortal sin ; and if he remain some time in such a complacency or desire, sin is renewed every time the will is interrupted, either *physically*, as through sleep, through business, &c., or *morally*, when he removes the bad intention, and afterwards returns to the former complacency or desire.

On the other hand, to undeceive those who, at any bad thought or sensual motion, suppose they commit sin, it is to establish as certain the theological principle, that the reason of sin does not consist in the bad thought, nor in the sensual motion, but in the will that approves it ; so that a bad action, to be a formal sin, must be the work of the will that directly or indirectly wishes such a thing. The adhesion, then, of our will to the sinful thing constitutes properly the sin, as S. Bernard observes—*voluntas est qua peccatur*. Now, neither the bad thought nor the motion of sensuality depends on our will, as experience teaches us ; and it is known that also the greatest saints have experienced in themselves, in spite of their good will, bad thoughts and sensual motions without being able to avoid them. “Our Divine Lord,” says S. Gregory (Past. part 3), “in the depth of His mercies, frequently permits the just to feel imperfect desires of evil, for which reason he

becomes disquieted and thinks he has sinned. This maintains him in humility, and is a barrier to all vain complacency he may take in his Christian justice." This happened to S. Paul in the height of his apostolical career, when, descending from the third heaven, he exclaimed, "There was given me a sting of the flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me." (2 Cor. ii. 7.) Hence, there is no sin in feeling inclination or even affection to a sinful thing, neither in enduring bad imaginations in our minds, or sensations in the flesh ; no, there is no sin in it, if our will contradicts the same, if our heart is not attached to it; as has been observed by S. Bernard ("De Domo Interiori"), saying : *Non nocet sensus nisi adsit consensus*—" Motion of sensuality does not hurt, provided it is not approved of by the will." And S. Thomas (in 2 Dist. 40, Q. 1, Art. 1) likewise says : *Non est actus meritorius vel demeritorius nisi ex voluntate deliberata procedat*—"There is no act worthy of merit or deserving demerit unless it proceed from a deliberate will." Indeed, when delight dwells in the inferior powers, so that the will has no part in it—nay, it protests and strives against it, and feels displeasure at it—such a concupiscence being involuntary, is not sinful—nay, it is a source of merit before God. In conclusion, all the malice of sin consists in a deliberate looking of our mind (or intellect) upon a sinful thing, with the consent of our will in that looking. It is, moreover, to be

observed, that a bad thought, of itself, so far as it is isolated, never is a sin. To be a sin, it must cause the desire or complacency of the will. Hence, every sin of thought consists either in the complacency or desire ; so that if a bad thought is isolated, and has caused neither complacency nor desire, it is a sign it has not been consented to, or has been rejected by the will : as, to commit sin, the will must either feel pleasure in it, or wish such a thing. A comparison will explain this doctrine more clearly. A beautiful painting is exposed to the public ; the first who passes by, looking at it, feels much pleasure in the beautiful picture ; another coming and looking at it, wishes to buy it ; a third looks simply at it, and without feeling any pleasure in it, or desiring it, goes away. In the first may be understood, by analogy, the sin of complacency ; in the second, of desire ; in the third, the want of both.

There are others who fail in the integrity of confession, by accusing themselves in such a way as not to be well understood by the confessor, making their sins to appear less grievous or less in number than they are. Likewise, those are wanting in integrity, who, while confessing their sins, wish to excuse themselves for having committed them ; as Aaron did, when rebuked by Moses for having moulded the golden calf, and caused the people to adore it ; he confessed the half of his sin, saying

that he had received some gold, he had put it into the fire and it came out a calf, as if it happened by chance, and not purposely : "They took the gold and brought it to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out." (Exod. xii. 24.) It is to be remembered that the tribunal of penance is a tribunal of accusation of oneself, and not of excuse ; so much so, that he who accuses himself sincerely and entirely has God's pardon, but whoever is deficient of sincerity and integrity will not be pardoned. S. Teresa, who had so much light from God, when speaking with missionaries and other preachers, used to inculcate to them to preach always about the necessity of avoiding bad confessions : "It is in consequence of bad confessions," she said, "that most part of Christians go to hell."

CHAPTER V.

ON SATISFACTION, OR PENANCE FOR SINS
CONFESSED.

ACCORDING to the Council of Trent, as has been already observed, to obtain God's pardon in the sacrament of penance, three acts are, by divine institution, required in the penitent, that is, contrition, confession, and satisfaction. Having already treated of the first and second acts, it remains now to explain what concerns the third, that is, satisfaction—*operis satisfactio*. *Satisfaction* means a compensation for the injury made to God by sin, which is enjoined by the priest in the tribunal of penance. This satisfaction, or penance, is not an essential part of confession, but an *integrant* one; as it may happen that, in consequence of a sudden death, or other unforeseen circumstance, the penitent does not perform the penance enjoined him, and still, for the confession he has already made, he has been restored to a state of grace. The Council of Trent says (sess. xiv. de Poenit. c. 3) : *Satisfactio in penitente ad integratatem sacramenti, ad plenam et perfectam peccatorum remissionem, ex Dei institutione requiritur*—“ Satisfaction is requisite by divine in-

stitution in the penitent, for the integrity of the sacrament, to have the full and perfect remission of sins." Hence, satisfaction for grievous sins being a duty of strict obligation for the penitent, if it deliberately be neglected, the penitent would be guilty of a mortal sin.

It is easy to prove the necessity and propriety of satisfaction. Man, when he sins, contracts the fault and incurs the punishment due to sin. Through sacramental absolution, the stain of the fault, and the eternal punishment due to mortal sin, are taken away ; but there is no remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, unless the penitent had a perfect contrition, because, on account of perfect contrition, the temporal punishment is also remitted. Now, the penance which is given by the confessor, is directed to satisfy, in this life, the temporal penalty due to sin. Penitential works, therefore, must be performed, the object of which is, that while they serve as a castigation for past sins, they might, at the same time, be a check to the repetition of the same, and strengthen the resolutions of amendment. Hence, the Council of Trent (sess. xiv. c. 8) says : " It is the duty of the ministers of the Church, as far as prudence shall suggest, weighing the character of sins and the dispositions of the sinner, to enjoin salutary and proper penitential satisfaction ; lest by conniving at sins, and by a criminal indulgence

imposing the performance of the slightest penances for great crimes, they be made partakers of others sins. Let them ever consider that what they enjoin must tend not only to the maintenance of better conduct and the cure of past infirmity, but also to the punishment of the sins that have been confessed." Upon which S. Thomas (in 4 Dist. 17, Q. 3, Art. 1) says : " Satisfaction which is imposed would not be sufficient to expiate the penalty for the sin, but it is sufficient as far as it is a part of the sacrament, having sacramental virtue."

There are Christians who, after making their confession, think no more of what has passed, and neglect to do penance for their sins. " Penance," says the same S. Thomas (p. 3, Q. 85, c. 3, cor.), " does not consist in the cessation only of sinning, but also in making satisfaction for sin." Hence, after confession, it is necessary to perform the penance imposed by the confessor, and to repair with positive acts the sins already confessed. By penance the converted sinner remedies the remains of his sins, receives strength not to fall again, takes away, through the exercise of the contrary virtues, vicious habits, keeps off divine chastisements, and becomes an imitator of Jesus Christ, who paid in Himself our sins, and made reparation for sinners.

He who should think that the confessor imposes penances too heavy or too long, would seem not to understand the gravity of the offence to God,

and of the punishment deserved for mortal sin. What proportion, indeed, can a penance have, though very long and heavy in this life, with the offence given to God, infinitely good and deserving of all our love ? To consider the penances which were given in the primitive Church, the penances of the present day would appear nothing. For some sins, to remain without the door of the church, or just within the entrance, for years and years, separated from the other faithful, deprived for a long time of the benefit of the sacraments, and obliged to continual mortification and prayer ! One is horror-stricken on hearing the penances of the ancient hermits described by S. John Climacus : they passed the night in reading holy books, the day in prayer, the weeks in fasting ; and in addition to sharp disciplines and stripes inflicted on their bodies, iron chains on their feet, instruments of torment round their loins, heavy stones round their neck, and in every part of their body sores and bruises ! Now, although the rigour of the ancient penitential canons has been much mitigated, the ways of God are, nevertheless, unchangeable ; and agreeable to those ways, the essential spirit of Christian discipline remains the same, and also at present a Christian ought to bear the mortification of Jesus Christ in his body. Our forefathers, after obtaining pardon for their fault, did penance for it all their life. The Jews,

in penance for their sins, were obliged, during forty years, to wander in the desert. Mary, sister of Moses, having obtained pardon for the sin of murmuring against her brother, was covered with leprosy, and for seven days excluded from the camp. Moses himself, having sinned by his misgiving at the waters of contradiction, in penance for it was deprived of the joy of entering into the land of promise. David, having obtained pardon for the sin committed with Bethsabee, in penance of it was obliged to suffer the death of his son, and besides he offered spontaneous satisfaction, as he himself relates (*Psalm li.*) : “ I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping ; ” and (*Psalm vi.*) : “ I am wearied with groaning, every night will I wash my bed : I will water my couch with my tears.” At the preaching of Jonas the Ninivites proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least. S. Peter, as Pope Gregory relates, fasted continually ; and the whole of his sustenance was upon a few peas, just sufficiently necessary to keep him alive. Moreover, he wept for his sin the whole of his life ; so much so, his face was furrowed with two channels running with tears. S. Matthew, as S. Clement of Alexandria relates (*l. i. c. 1*), never tasted meat. Philo the Jew praises the inhabitants of Alexandria on account of their mortification ; and S. Epiphanius bears the same witness to all the faithful of the

primitive Church. S. Augustine relates that he saw in Rome men and women, although of feeble complexion, using such mortifications as to remain fasting three or four consecutive days without taking even a drop of water. S. Mary of Egypt, a convert from a wicked life, did great penance in the desert for fifty years. S. Pelagia, also a convert from a dissolute life, passed many years doing penance near the valley of Josaphat. Whoever has sinned must do penance, and by it give satisfaction for the faults he has committed ; and thus provide himself with arms to fight against both his inward and outward enemies, that are constantly conspiring his eternal ruin. Indeed, if the greatest saints were not exempted from the obligation of doing penance, how can a sinner be said not to be obliged to do so ? If S. John the Baptist, of whom the Gospel says that no greater saint had ever been born, did such rigid penance in the desert ; if S. Aloysius Gonzaga, who was known to have never stained his soul with mortal sin, was so severe to himself as even to terrify the reader of his life ; if so many virgins gave themselves up to such rigid and penitent lives—what shall he do who, by mortal sin, has been an enemy to God, and a victim already destined to eternal fire ?

But a twofold objection is brought forward by unmortified worldlings, to excuse themselves from

the exercise of the works of penance ; it is, that by doing penance they *soon would die*, and would live a *wretched life*. However, both assertions, besides being false in themselves, are contradicted by facts. If the first were true, it would follow that those who do penance die soon, and the sooner in proportion as the penance is greater. But facts show just the contrary ; for, generally speaking, penitent and mortified persons are found to have been very long-lived. Let us take for example the saints, even the most celebrated amongst them for the rigours of penance, and observe their longevity. S. Hilarion lived eighty years ; S. Martin, eighty-one ; S. Maurice, ninety ; S. Arsenius, ninety-five ; S. Maccarius, ninety-six ; S. Jerome and S. Zozimus, one hundred ; S. John the Silent, one hundred and four ; S. Anthony, one hundred and five ; S. Pachomius, one hundred and ten ; S. Anselm and S. Romuald one hundred and twenty ; and the history of the last saint says, that out of the one hundred and twenty, one hundred years were passed by him in the most rigid and penitential life. Hence, from the example of the said and many other penitent saints who died very old, it must be inferred, that it is not true that penitent life accelerates death. It is rather the neglect of mortification and penance that generally causes premature death ; for daily experience shows that

middle-aged persons go to the grave in consequence of their disordered life, and in particular for their intemperance and impurity.

The other objection of effeminate and worldly persons to avoid doing penance, is that a penitent life is a *wretched life*. Here is the great mistake of worldlings: they believe a good and mortified life to be a miserable life, when the case is the very reverse. Good Christians, while they afflict the body, and mortify their passions, feel in their soul an inexplicable sweetness, which renders them contented and happy. The tears which the eyes of a converted sinner shed, are sweeter than any delight in this world. S. Jerome, while he struck his breast with a stone, while he was fasting and continually weeping, experienced such emotions in his heart (as we have related by himself in a letter which he wrote to Eustochium), that after many tears and raising of his eyes to heaven, he seemed to be already in the joys of paradise, in the midst of the choirs of the angels. David, likewise, related of himself, that as many as were the tears he shed, so many were the consolations which rendered his soul joyful. S. Ignatius of Loyola, being at Manresa for a year, whilst daily fasting and excruciating cruelly his body, had so many illuminations in his mind, and felt such a comfort in his heart, that he used to say, that even if there were no divine Scriptures, he would

be ready to give up his life for the faith, in consequence of what God showed to him at Manresa. S. Francis Xavier, in the midst of so many sufferings, fatigues, and penances, cried out : “*Enough, enough! O God, no more!*” such was the gladness of his heart. S. Philip Neri, through the vehemence of his love towards God, had two ribs broken in his side. S. Augustine confessed, that he felt much more joy in the privation of pleasure, than in the satisfaction of the senses. S. Lewis, from being the eldest son of Charles, King of Naples, having become a poor friar of S. Francis, used to say : “A bit of bread, procured by begging, was more delicious to him than the delights of the royal table.” The Apostle S. Paul super-abounded with joy in the midst of the greatest tribulations. S. Peter of Alcantara, after a most penitential life, having gained heaven, appeared to S. Teresa surrounded with glory, exclaiming : “O happy penance, that hath procured me so much glory!” Therefore, the assertion that to do penance is likely to produce a premature death, or to render life melancholy or wretched, is quite false, as facts have proved that penance is the means to be happy in this life, and infinitely more so in the next. Besides, it is certain, that without doing penance nobody can enter into heaven, as our Saviour admonishes us : “Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.” (Luke, xiii. 5.) And

the Apostle S. Paul says, that mortification and penance are the distinctive marks of a Christian : “ They that are Christ’s have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences.” (Gal. v. 24.) And he adds : “ Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth ; fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols” (Col. iii. 5) ; explaining how such mortification has to be practised, by “ stripping yourselves of the old man, and putting on the new man.” (Col. iii. 9.)

Since, however, some, on account of illness or natural weakness, allege that works of corporal penance are wholly impracticable to them, here is suggested a particular manner of doing penance which is calculated for all, and from which no one can be reasonably dispensed. As all men can sin by making bad use of the powers of the soul, as well as the senses of the body, so the object of penance and mortification can be, and ought to be, both the interior of the soul, and the exterior of the body. The *memory* may be mortified by avoiding to call to mind the pleasing things of the past life, the honours and marks of distinctions, the glories, the progress made by one’s industry and talents, and so on, and by endeavouring to recollect only one’s own origin from sin, and the past wretchedness, bondage, and malice. The *understanding* may be mortified by subduing it obediently to all

things revealed by God to the Church, by renouncing one's own opinion, and making no account of the learning and talents one may have. The *will* may be mortified by humbly obeying the law of God, and those who hold in this world the power of ruling in the place of God, and by readily following the will of God in all things, being thoroughly persuaded that whatever is conformable to His will is profitable, glorious, good, and to be desired above all things. To the mortification of the powers of the soul, the repenting sinner ought to unite that of the senses of the body. The *tongue* should be mortified by not allowing it to speak ill of anyone, nay, by speaking well of all, by not saying any word which may be calculated to be injurious to God or man, by avoiding every unseemly word or improper song. The *hearing* should be mortified by shutting the ear to detractions, to wicked and worldly talking, and also to those discourses which may redound to our own praise. The *smelling* should be mortified by avoiding pleasing perfumes, and seeking disagreeable odours. The *taste* should be mortified by refraining from savoury food and beverage, and preferring unpalatable victuals and drinking. The *feeling* should be mortified by forbidding the body whatever may be the occasion of the rebellion of the senses, and by removing the causes which may excite the passions. Finally, to check one of the most hideous passions

of man, which is avarice, and consists in the appetite for money, and in the disorderly love of riches, the repentant sinner ought to give alms to the poor, or for charitable purposes, having before his eyes that almsgiving is a precept of God—*quod superest date pauperibus* (Luke, xi. 40)—upon which text S. Thomas (2, 2, Q. 32, Art. 5) says: “To give alms from the superfluity”—what is not necessary for life—“is a precept.” In this way, without injury to the bodily health, every one may advance in virtue, and preserve in himself the spirit of penance, commanded by God to all, and from which no Christian can be dispensed.

In order to embrace Christian mortification, we must remember that heaven cannot be secured but by doing violence to ourselves, as our divine Saviour assures us: “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.” (Matt. xi. 12.) This violence is placed exactly in putting in practice Christian mortification, and fighting against our spiritual enemies, both interior and exterior. The life of man upon earth is a continual warfare (Job, vii. 1), and the Christian who would overcome temptations, and save his soul, must do precisely as the soldier does in battle, when surrounded by his enemies; he must go on and make his way in the midst of his enemies, with sword in hand, by striking, wounding, killing here and there as many enemies as obstruct him on his way to heaven. As

the incentives to sin and the rebellious passions remain within us, we are always in a continual warfare between the flesh and the spirit, as the Apostle apprises us : “ The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; for these are contrary one to another ” (Gal. v. 17) ; and then it is necessary to follow the example of the same Apostle, by mortifying the body and keeping it in servitude : “ I chastise my body and bring it into subjection.” (1 Cor. ix. 27.) Passions may be mortified, but cannot be annihilated ; so that every one must be always with his weapon in hands, to battle with and keep them under subjection. Hence, as he who has many enemies before him, will be vanquished if he desists from fighting against them ; so if a Christian ceases to fight against his spiritual enemies that are around him—demons, concupiscences, and vices—he will fall into their hands. To this continual war we are encouraged, not only by the command, but also by the example of Jesus Christ, who, although He stood not in need of any mortification (as there was in Him no disorder of passions), yet, to persuade us of the necessity of mortification, and to give us the example and merit, led a mortified and very painful life. He offers us His powerful grace to combat and overcome all our enemies. “ While you combat,” says S. Augustine (in Ex. xxx. 11), “ God is looking at you ; and if you bend, He upholds you, and He crowns you if

you triumph." But, at the same time, Jesus Christ threatens us that He will not recognize as His followers those who do not follow Him faithfully in the way of incessant mortification of all their passions and disorderly appetites: "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me." (Matt. x. 28.)

To encourage oneself to sufferings and pains, it is proper to raise one's eyes to heaven, and reflect upon the great and ineffable gifts prepared there for those who in this world lead a mortified life. Eternal bliss is the result, not only of God's grace and mercy, but also of the industry, labour, and voluntary suffering of the man; so that the more a Christian shall have used industry, labour, and suffering on this earth for the love of God, the greater shall be his glory in heaven. God in paradise will wipe away the tears which His faithful followers shall have shed here: "God shall wipe away the tears from their eyes." (Apoc. vii. 17.) The pains and afflictions of the present life, although most grievous and uninterrupted, have no proportion at all with the eternal gladness of the next, as S. Paul assures us: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.) Besides that, the sufferings of this world are short, human life being short; and yet through so short suffering an endless

enjoyment shall be obtained. Who, then, is so foolish, as, rather than endure so little, to lose an eternal life? Who, for not relinquishing a vile and short pleasure, consents to lose an eternity of delights? S. Pelagia, hearing a sermon, began to say to herself : “*Pelagia, what will you gain by your pleasures if you go to hell?*” This consideration had such an effect on her, that from a great and public sinner, she became a great saint. Let us, then, profit by her example, to detach our heart from what is displeasing to God. Let us consider the shortness of life, and say to ourselves : What a folly it would be for a short delight to incur an eternal suffering, and to avoid a short suffering to lose an eternal delight! I will undertake a penitential life like hers, and by this means be her companion in glory.

An efficacious means to obtain the grace of making a good confession and the changing of life, is devotion towards the Immaculate Queen of heaven. She, by an impulse of maternal love (as has been observed by S. Bernard), is solicitous to stand before her divine Son for the cause of those who apply to her. The grace to make a good confession, and begin a new Christian life, is both just and pleasing to Mary : hence, no doubt should be entertained of obtaining it through her powerful intercession, if asked for. Now, one of the most efficacious means to receive it, is the devout recital

of the Rosary. A great many sinners have by this means been converted ; others have confessed their sins which they had concealed through shame for years and years ; and others have had a true sorrow for their sins, which they wanted. To a man who wished to have a preservative against committing sacrilege, as he had previously done by concealing his sins, S. Dominic said to him : “*I give you a master who will teach you to make good confessions, and this is the recital of the holy Rosary.*” It is known that through the Rosary the Church has always obtained great graces in time of public calamities, and victories against her enemies ; and in particular the heresy of the Albigenses was effectually put a stop to through this powerful devotion. Show, therefore, your devotion to the blessed Mother of God by the daily devout recital of the Rosary, and by it your spiritual enemies will be subdued, your confessions will be rightly made, and your eternal salvation secured.

THE END.

7 DE 55

ERRATA.

- Pag. 32 lin. 26, chief,
" 50 " 9, of remission,
" 67 " 8, section second,
" 92 " 17, Bretenil,
" 94 " 10, Marechal,
" 116 " 12, in the vii., viii., ix. and x. of the preceding chapters,
- " 164 " 20, as divine precepts determined in their accomplishment,
- " 184 " 23, affection,
" 189 " 10, observes,
" 197 " 21, of the offended God,
- " 200 " 11, without feeling it,
" 215 " 30, I know,
" 234 " 26, is useful,
" 244 " 3, must cause,
" 249 " 25, agreeable,

CORRIGE.

- chiefs.
the remission.
section third.
Breteuil.
Marshal.
- in the vii., viii., ix. and x. sections of the preceding chapter.
- as determinations of divine precepts.
inclination.
observe.
- of a Christian who offended God.
without showing it.
I knew.
is necessary.
must be followed by.
agreeably.



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